

THE
V I C A R
OF
WAKEFIELD:

T A L E

Goldsmit (U.)

SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

Sperate miseri, cautes felices.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME FIRST.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR J. DAVIES, T. SMITH, N. TAYLOR,
AND W. THOMSON.

M D C C LXXXIX.



Advertisement.

THERE are an hundred faults in this thing, and an hundred things might be said, to prove them beauties. But it is needless. A book may be amusing, with numerous errors ; or, it may be very dull, without a single absurdity. The hero of this piece unites in himself the three greatest characters upon earth ; he is a priest, an husbandman, and the father of a family. He is drawn as ready to teach, and ready to obey ; as simple in affluence, and majestic in adversity. In this age of opulence and refinement, whom can such a character please ? Such as are fond of high life will turn with disdain from the

simplicity of his country fire-side. Such as mistake ribaldry for humour, will find no wit in his harmless conversation; and such as have been taught to deride religion, will laugh at one whose chief stores of comfort are drawn from futurity.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

THE
ADVENTURE OF
OLIVER GOLDSMITH

First published bound as THE ADVENTURE OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH, and again bound as THE ADVENTURE OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH, a new edition, and story of his adventures at the time of the Revolution, now ed. with a new and improved edition. The author of this work is a man of great talents, and has written in a style easily understood by all. The story is well told, and the characters are well drawn. The plot is well contrived, and the scenes well described. The author has written in a simple, easy, and natural style, which is well suited to the subject. The book is well bound, and the paper is well printed. The author has written in a simple, easy, and natural style, which is well suited to the subject. The book is well bound, and the paper is well printed. THE

THE
VICAR.
OF
WAKEFIELD.

C H A P. I.

The description of the family of Wakefield; in which a kindred likeness prevails, as well of minds as of persons.

I WAS ever of opinion, that the honest man who married, and brought up a large family, did more service than he who continued single, and only talked of population. From this motive, I had scarce taken orders a year, before I began to think seriously of matrimony, chose my wife as she did her wedding-gown, not for a fine glossy surface, but such qualities as would wear well. To do her justice, she was a good-natured notable woman; and as for breeding, there were few country ladies who at that time could show more. She could read any English book without much spelling; and for pickling, preserving, and cookery, none could excel her. She prided herself much also upon being an excellent contriver in housekeeping; yet I could never find that we grew richer with all her contrivances.

Vol. I.

A

However,

However, we loved each other tenderly, and our fondness increased with age. There was, in fact, nothing that could make us angry with the world, or each other. We had an elegant house, situated in a fine country, and a good neighbourhood. The year was spent in moral or rural amusements; in visiting our rich neighbours, or relieving such as were poor. We had no revolutions to fear, nor fatigues to undergo; all our adventures were by the fire-side, and all our migrations from the blue bed to the brown.

As we lived near the road, we often had the traveller or stranger come to taste our gooseberry wine, for which we had great reputation; and I profess, with the veracity of an historian, I never knew one of them find fault with it. Our cousins, too, even to the fortieth remove, all remembered their affinity, without any help from the Herald's office, and came very frequently to see us. Some of them did us no great honour, by these claims of kindred; for, literally speaking, we had the blind, the maimed, and the halt, amongst the number. However, my wife always insisted, that, as they were the same *flesh and blood* with us, they should sit with us at the same table. So that, if we had not very rich, we generally had very happy friends about us; for this remark will ever hold good through life, That the poorer the guest, the better pleased he ever is with being treated: and, as some men gaze with admiration at the colours of a tulip, and others are smitten with the wing of a butterfly, so I was, by nature, an admirer of happy human faces.

WAKEFIELD.

faces. However, when any one of our relations was found to be a person of very bad character, a trouble-some guest, or one we desired to get rid of; upon his leaving my house for the first time, I ever took care to lend him a riding-coat, or a pair of boots, or sometimes an horse of small value; and I always had the satisfaction of finding he never came back to return them. By this, the house was cleared of such as we did not like: but never was the family of Wakefield known to turn the traveller or the poor dependent out of doors.

Thus we lived several years in a state of much happiness; not but that we sometimes had those little rubs which Providence sends to enhance the value of its favours. My orchard was often robbed by schoolboys, and my wife's curstards plundered by the cats of the children. The Squire would sometimes fall asleep in the most pathetic parts of my sermon, or his lady return my wife's civilities at church with a mutilated courtesy. But we soon got over the uneasiness caused by such accidents; and usually in three or four days we began to wonder how they vexed us.

My children, the offspring of temperance, as they were educated without softness, so they were at once well formed and healthy; my sons hardy and active, my daughters dutiful and blooming. When I stood in the midst of the little circle, which promised to be the supports of my declining age, I could not avoid repeating the famous story of Count Abensberg, who, in Henry II.'s progress through Germany, when

THE VICAR OF

other courtiers came with their treasures, brought his thirty-two children, and presented them to his sovereign as the most valuable offering he had to bestow. In this manner, though I had but six, I considered them as a very valuable present made to my country, and, consequently, looked upon it as my debtor. Our eldest son was named George, after his uncle, who left us ten thousand pounds. Our second child, a girl, I intended to call after her aunt Grizel: but my wife, who, during the time of her pregnancy, had been reading romances, insisted upon her being called Olivia. In less than another year we had a daughter again; and now I was determined that Grizel should be her name; but a rich relation taking a fancy to stand godmother, the girl was, by her directions, called Sophia; so that we had two romantic names in the family; but I solemnly protest I had no hand in it. Moses was our next; and, after an interval of twelve years, we had two sons more.

It would be fruitless to deny my exultation, when I saw my little ones about me; but the vanity and satisfaction of my wife were even greater than mine: When our visitors would usually say, "Well, upon my word, Mrs Primrose, you have the finest children in the whole country." "Ay, neighbour," she would answer, "they are as heaven made them; handsome enough, if they be good enough; for handsome is, that handsome does." And then she would bid the girls hold up their heads; who, to conceal nothing, were certainly very handsome. Mere

outside

WAKEFIELD.

outside is so very trifling a circumstance with me, that I should scarce have remembered to mention it, had it not been a general topic of conversation in the country. Olivia, now about eighteen, had that luxuriancy of beauty with which painters generally draw Hebe; open, sprightly, and commanding. Sophia's features were not so striking at first; but often did more certain execution; for they were soft, modest, and alluring. The one vanquished by a single blow, the other by efforts successively repeated.

The temper of a woman is generally formed from the turn of her features, at least it was so with my daughters. Olivia wished for many lovers, Sophia to secure one. Olivia was often affected, from too great a desire to please. Sophia even repressed excellence, from her fears to offend. The one entertained me with her vivacity when I was gay, the other with her sense when I was serious. But these qualities were never carried to excess in either; and I have often seen them exchange characters for a whole day together. A suit of mourning has transformed my coquette into a prude; and a new set of ribbands given her younger sister more than natural vivacity. My eldest son George was bred at Oxford, as I intended him for one of the learned professions. My second boy, Moses, whom I designed for business, received a sort of a miscellaneous education at home. But it would be needless to attempt describing the particular characters of young people that had seen but very little of the world. In short, a family likeness prevailed through

all ; and, properly speaking, they had but one character, that of being all equally generous, credulous, simple, and inoffensive.

C H A P. II.

Family misfortunes. The loss of fortune only serves to increase the pride of the worthy.

THE temporal concerns of our family were chiefly committed to my wife's management : as to the spiritual, I took them entirely under my own direction. The profits of my living, which amounted but to thirty-five pounds a-year, I gave to the orphans and widows of the clergy of our diocese ; for, having a sufficient fortune of my own, I was careless of temporalities, and felt a secret pleasure in doing my duty without reward. I also set a resolution of keeping no curate, and of being acquainted with every man in the parish, exhorting the married men to temperance, and the bachelors to matrimony ; so that, in a few years, it was a common saying, That there were three strange wants at Wakefield, a parson wanting pride, young men wanting wives, and ale-houses wanting customers.

Matrimony was always one of my favourite topics ; and I wrote several sermons to prove its utility and happiness : but there was a peculiar tenet which I made

made a point of supporting; for I maintained with Whiston, That it was unlawful for a priest of the church of England, after the death of his first wife, to take a second; or, to express it in one word, valued myself upon being a strict monogamist.

I was early initiated into this important dispute, on which so many laborious volumes have been written. I published some tracts upon the subject myself, which, as they never sold, I have the consolation of thinking, are read only by the happy *Few*. - Some of my friends called this my weak side; but, alas! they had not, like me, made it the subject of long contemplation. The more I reflected upon it, the more important it appeared. I even went a step beyond Whiston in displaying my principles: as he had engraven upon his wife's tomb, that she was the *only* wife of William Whiston; so I wrote a similar epitaph for my wife, though still living, in which I extolled her prudence, economy, and obedience, till death; and having got it copied fair, with an elegant frame, it was placed over the chimney-piece, where it answered several very useful purposes. It admonished my wife of her duty to me, and my fidelity to her; it inspired her with a passion for fame, and constantly put her in mind of her end.

It was thus, perhaps, from hearing marriage so often recommended, that my eldest son, just upon leaving college, fixed his affections upon the daughter of a neighbouring clergyman, who was a dignitary in the church, and in circumstances to give her a large fortune:

time: but fortune was her smallest accomplishment. Miss Arabella Wilmot was allowed by all, except my two daughters, to be completely pretty. Her youth, health, and innocence, were still heightened by a complexion so transparent, and such an happy sensibility of look, that even age could not gaze with indifference. As Mr Wilmot knew that I could make a very handsome settlement on my son, he was not averse to the match; so both families lived together in all that harmony which generally precedes an expected alliance. Being convinced, by experience, that the days of courtship are the most happy of our lives, I was willing enough to lengthen the period; and the various amusements which the young couple every day shared in each other's company, seemed to increase their passion. We were generally awaked in the morning by music, and on fine days rode a-hunting. The hours between breakfast and dinner the ladies devoted to dress and study: they usually read a page, and then gazed at themselves in the glass, which even philosophers might own, often presented the page of greatest beauty. At dinner, my wife took the lead: for, as she always insisted upon carving every thing herself, it being her mother's way, she gave us, upon these occasions, the history of every dish. When we had dined, to prevent the ladies leaving us, I generally ordered the table to be removed; and sometimes, with the music-master's assistance, the girls would give us a very agreeable concert. Walking out, drinking tea, country dances, and forfeits, shortened

WAKEFIELD.

the rest of the day, without the assistance of cards, as I hated all manner of gaming, except backgammon, at which my old friend and I sometimes took a two-penny hit. Nor can I here pass over an ominous circumstance that happened the last time we played together. I only wanted to fling a quatre, and yet I threw a deuce-ace five times running.

Some months were elapsed in this manner, till at last it was thought convenient to fix a day for the nuptials of the young couple, who seemed earnestly to desire it. During the preparations for the wedding, I need not describe the busy importance of my wife, nor the sly looks of my daughters: In fact, my attention was fixed on another object, the completing a tract which I intended shortly to publish, in defence of monogamy. As I looked upon this as a master-piece, both for argument and style, I could not, in the pride of my heart, avoid showing it to my old friend Mr Wilmot; as I made no doubt of receiving his approbation; but too late I discovered, that he was most violently attached to the contrary opinion; and with good reason, for he was at that time actually courting a fourth wife. This, as may be expected, produced a dispute, attended with some acrimony, which threatened to interrupt our intended alliance: but on the day before that appointed for the ceremony, we agreed to discuss the subject at large.

It was managed with proper spirit on both sides: he asserted that I was heterodox: I retorted the charge: he replied, and I rejoined. In the mean time,

time, while the controversy was hottest, I was called out by one of my relations, who, with a face of concern, advised me to give up the dispute, and allow the old gentleman to be a husband, if he could, at least till my son's wedding was over. "How," cried I, "relinquish the cause of truth, and let him be an husband, already driven to the very verge of absurdity? You might as well advise me to give up my fortune as my argument." "That fortune," returned my friend, "I am now sorry to inform you, is almost nothing. Your merchant in town, in whose hands your money was lodged, has gone off, to avoid a statute of bankruptcy; and, it is thought, has not left a shilling in the pound. I was unwilling to shock you, or the family, with the account, till after the wedding: but now it may serve to moderate your warmth in the argument; for I suppose your own prudence will enforce the necessity of dissembling, at least till your son has the young lady's fortune secure." "Well," returned I, "if what you tell me be true, and if I am to be a beggar, it shall never make me a rascal, or induce me to disavow my principles. I'll go this moment and inform the company of my circumstances; and as for the argument, I even here retract my former concessions in the old gentleman's favour; nor will I allow him now to be an husband, either *de jure*, *de facto*, or in any sense of the expression."

It would be endless to describe the different sensations of both families, when I divulged the news of my

my misfortune, but what others felt was slight, to what the young lovers appeared to endure. Mr. Whitmot, who seemed before sufficiently inclined to break off the match, was, by this blow, soon determined; one virtue he had in perfection, which was prudence, too often the only virtue that is left us unimpaired at seventy-two. His position to the being his benefactor was a very painful one; and when he got over this his next step was to seek out his old master, who now I suppose was dead, and to inform him of his son's conduct, which he did with a very ill-tempered and ungracious空气. This he did on the 11th of April.

C H A P. III.

A migration. The fortunate circumstances of our lives are generally found at last to be of our own procuring.

THE only hope of our family now was, that the report of our misfortunes might be malicious or premature; but a letter from my agent in town soon came, with a confirmation of every particular. The loss of fortune, to myself alone, would have been trifling; the only uneasiness I felt was for my family, who were to be humble, without such an education as would render them callous to contempt.

Near a fortnight passed away before I attempted to restrain their affliction; for premature consolation is but the remembrance of sorrow. During this interval, my thoughts were employed on some future means of supporting them; and at last a small cure of fifteen pounds a-year was offered me in a distant

neigh-

THE VICAR OF

neighbourhood, where I could still enjoy my principles without molestation. With this proposal I joyfully closed, having determined to increase my salary by managing a little farm.

Having taken this resolution, my next care was to get together the wrecks of my fortune ; and, all debts collected and paid, out of fourteen thousand pounds we had now but four hundred remaining. My chief attention, therefore, was next to bring down the pride of my family to their circumstances ; for I well knew, that aspiring beggary is wretchedness itself. " You can't be ignorant, my Children," cried I, " that no prudence of ours could have prevented our late misfortune ; but prudence may do much in disappointing its effects. We are now poor, my fondlings ; and wisdom bids us conform to our humble situation. Let us, then, without repining, give up those splendours with which numbers are wretched, and seek, in humbler circumstances, that peace with which all may be happy. The poor live pleasantly without our help ; and we are not so imperfectly formed as to be capable of living without theirs. No, my children, let us, from this moment, give up all pretensions to gentility : we have still enough left us for happiness, if we are wise ; and let us draw upon Content for the deficiencies of Fortune."

As my eldest son was bred a scholar, I determined to send him to town, where his abilities might contribute to our support and his own. The separation of friends and families is, perhaps, one of the

most

most distressful circumstances attendant on penury. The day soon arrived on which we were soon to disperse for the first time. My son, after taking leave of his mother and the rest, who mingled their tears with kisses, came to ask a blessing from me. This I gave him from my heart, and which, added to five guineas, was all the patrimony I had now to bestow. "You are going, my boy," cried I, "to London on foot, in the manner Hooker, your great ancestor, travelled there before you. Take from me the same horse that was given him by the good bishop Jewel, this staff, and this book too,—it will be your comfort on the way; these two lines in it are worth a million, *I have been young, and now am old; yet never saw I the righteous man forsaken, or his seed begging their bread.* Let this be your consolation as you travel on. Go my boy: whatever be thy fortune, let me see thee once a-year: still keep a good heart, and farewell." As he was possessed of integrity and honour, I was under no apprehensions from throwing him naked into the amphitheatre of life; for I knew he would act a good part, whether he rose or fell.

His departure only prepared the way for our own, which arrived a few days afterwards. The leaving a neighbourhood in which we had enjoyed so many hours of tranquillity, was not without a tear, which scarce fortitude itself could suppress. Besides, a journey of seventy miles, to a family that had hitherto never been above ten from home, filled us with apprehension;

henion ; and the cries of the poor, who followed us for some miles, contributed to increase it. The first day's journey brought us in safety within thirty miles of our future retreat ; and we put up, for the night, at an obscure inn in a village by the way. When we were shown a room, I desired the landlord, in my usual way, to let us have his company, with which he complied, as what he drank would increase the bill next morning. He knew, however, the whole neighbourhood to which I was removing, particularly Squire Thornhill, who was to be my landlord, and who lived within a few miles of the place. This gentleman he described, as one who desired to know little more of the world than the pleasures it afforded, being particularly remarkable for his attachment to the fair sex. He observed, that no virtue was able to resist his arts and assiduity, and that scarce a farmer's daughter within ten miles round but what had found him successful and faithless. Though this account gave me some pain, it had a very different effect upon my daughters, whose features seemed to brighten with the expectation of an approaching triumph ; nor was my wife less pleased and confident of their allurements and virtue. While our thoughts were thus employed, the hostess entered the room, to inform her husband, that the strange gentleman, who had been two days in the house, wanted money, and could not satisfy them for his reckoning. "Want money !" replied the host, " that must be impossible ; for it was no later than yesterday he paid three

" guineas

“ guineas to our beadle, to spare an old broken soldier, that was to be whipped through the town for dog-stealing.” The hostess, however, still persisting in her first assertion, he was preparing to leave the room, swearing that he would be satisfied one way or other, when I begged the landlord would introduce me to a stranger of so much charity as he described. With this he complied, showing in a gentleman who seemed to be about thirty, dressed in clothes that once were laced. His person was well formed, though his face was marked with the lines of thinking. He had something short and dry in his address, and seemed not to understand ceremony, or to despise it. Upon the landlord’s leaving the room, I could not avoid expressing my concern to the stranger, at seeing a gentleman in such circumstances, and offered him my purse to satisfy the present demand. “ I take it with all my heart, Sir,” replied he, “ and am glad that a late oversight, in giving what money I had about me, has shown me there is still some benevolence left among us. I must, however, previously intreat being informed of the name and residence of my benefactor, in order to remit it as soon as possible.” In this I satisfied him fully, not only mentioning my name and late misfortunes, but the place to which I was going to remove. “ This,” cried he, “ happens still more luckily than I hoped for, as I am going the same way myself, having been detained here two days by the floods, which, I hope, by to-morrow will be found

" passable." I testified the pleasure I should have in his company; and my wife and daughters joining in intreaty, he was prevailed upon to stay to supper." The stranger's conversation, which was at once pleasing and instructive, induced me to wish for a continuance of it; but it was now high time to retire and take refreshment against the fatigues of the following day.

" The next morning we all set forward together; my family on horseback, while Mr Burchell, our new companion, walked along the foot-path by the roadside, observing, with a smile, that, as we were ill-mounted, he would be too generous to attempt leaving us behind. As the floods were not yet subsided, we were obliged to hire a guide, who trotted on before, Mr Burchell and I bringing up the rear. We lightened the fatigues of the road with philosophical disputes, which he seemed perfectly to understand. But what surprised me most was, that though he was a money-borrower, yet he defended his opinions with as much obstinacy as if he had been my patron. He now and then also informed me to whom the different seats belonged that lay in our view as we travelled the road. " That," cried he, pointing to a very magnificent house, which stood at some distance, " belongs to Mr Thornhill, a young gentleman who enjoys a large fortune, though entirely dependent on the will of his uncle, Sir William Thornhill; a gentleman, who, content with a little himself, permits his nephew to enjoy the rest, and chiefly resides in town."

“ town.” “ What !” cried I, “ is my young land-
“ lord then the nephew of a man whose virtues, ge-
“ nerosity, and singularities, are so universally known ?
“ I have heard Sir William Thornhill represented as
“ one of the most generous, yet whimsical men in the
“ kingdom ; a man of consummate benevolence.” —
“ Something, perhaps too much so,” replied Mr Bur-
“ chell, “ at least he carried benevolence to an excess
“ when young ; for his passions were then strong,
“ and as they all were upon the side of virtue, they
“ led it up to a romantic extreme. He early began to
“ aim at the qualifications of the soldier and scholar ;
“ was soon distinguished in the army, and had some re-
“ putation among men of learning. Adulation ever
“ follows the ambitious ; for such alone receive most
“ pleasure from flattery. He was surrounded with
“ crowds, who showed him only one side of their
“ character ; so that he began to lose a regard
“ for private interest in universal sympathy. He
“ loved all mankind ; for fortune prevented him
“ from knowing that there were rascals. Physicians
“ tell us of a disorder, in which the whole body is so
“ exquisitely sensible, that the slightest touch gives
“ pain : what some have thus suffered in their persons,
“ this gentleman felt in his mind. The slightest di-
“ stress, whether real or fictitious, touched him to the
“ quick, and his soul laboured under a sickly sensibi-
“ lity of the miseries of others. Thus disposed to re-
“ lieve, it will be easily conjectured, he found num-
“ bers disposed to solicit : his profusions began to im-

pair his fortune, but not his good-nature ; that, indeed, was seen to increase, as the other seemed to decay : he grew improvident as he grew poor ; and, though he talked like a man of sense, his actions were those of a fool. Still, however, being surrounded with importunity, and no longer able to satisfy every request that was made him, instead of money he gave promises. They were all he had to bestow, and he had not resolution enough to give any man pain by a denial. By this means he drew round him crowds of dependents, whom he was sure to disappoint, yet wished to relieve. These hung upon him for a time, and left him with merited reproaches and contempt. But, in proportion as he became contemptible to others, he became despicable to himself. His mind had leaned upon their adulation ; and, that support taken away, he could find no pleasure in the applause of his heart, which he had never learned to reverence itself. The world now began to wear a different aspect ; the flattery of his friends began to dwindle into simple approbation, that soon took the more friendly form of advice ; and advice, when rejected, ever begets reproaches. He now found, that such friends as benefits had gathered round him, were by no means the most estimable : It was now found, that a man's own heart must be ever given to gain that of another. I now found, that—but I forget what I was going to observe: in short, Sir, he resolved to respect himself, and laid down a plan of restoring his.

His shattered fortune. For this purpose, in his own whimsical manner, he travelled through Europe on foot, and, before he attained the age of thirty, his circumstances were more affluent than ever. At present, therefore, his bounties are more rational and moderate than before; but still he preserves the character of an humourist, and finds most pleasure in eccentric virtues."

My attention was so much taken up by Mr Burshell's account, that I scarce looked forward as we went along, till we were alarmed by the cries of my family; when turning, I perceived my youngest daughter in the midst of a rapid stream, thrown from her horse, and struggling with the torrent. She had sunk twice; nor was it in my power to disengage myself in time to bring her relief. My sensations were even too violent to permit my attempting her rescue: she would have certainly perished, had not my companion, perceiving her danger, instantly plunged in to her relief, and, with some difficulty, brought her in safety to the opposite shore. By taking the current a little farther up, the rest of the family got safely over; where we had an opportunity of joining our acknowledgments to hers. Her gratitude may be more readily imagined than described: she thanked her deliverer more with looks than words, and continued to lean upon his arm, as if still willing to receive assistance. My wife also, hoped one day to have the pleasure of returning his kindness at her own house. Thus, after we were all refreshed at the next inn, and had dined.

THE VICAR OF

dined together, as he was going to a different part of the country, he took his leave, and we pursued our journey; my wife observing, as we went, that she liked Mr Burchell extremely; and protesting, that, if he had birth and fortune to entitle him to match into such a family as ours, she knew no man she would sooner fix upon. I could not but smile to hear her talk in this strain: one almost at the verge of beggary, thus to assume language of the most insulting affluence, might excite the ridicule of ill-nature; but I was never much displeased with those innocent delusions, that tend to make us more happy.

C H A P. IV.

A proof that even the humblest fortune may grant happiness and delight, which depend, not on circumstance, but constitution.

THE place of our new retreat was in a little neighbourhood, consisting of farmers, who tilled their own grounds, and were equally strangers to opulence and poverty. As they had almost all the conveniences of life within themselves, they seldom visited towns or cities in search of superfluity. Remote from the polite, they still retained a primæval simplicity of manners, and, frugal by long habit, scarce knew that temperance was a virtue. They wrought with cheerful-

ness

ness on days of labour; but observed festivals as intervals of idleness and pleasure. They kept up the Christmas carol; sent true-love knots on Valentine morning; eat pancakes on Shrovetide; showed their wit on the first of April; and religiously cracked nuts on Michaelmas eve. Being apprised of our approach, the whole neighbourhood came out to meet their minister, dressed in their finest clothes, and preceded by a pipe and tabor: also a feast was provided for our reception, at which we sat cheerfully down; and what the conversation wanted in wit, we made up in laughter.

Our little habitation was situated at the foot of a sloping hill, sheltered with a beautiful underwood behind, and a prattling river before: on one side a meadow, on the other a green. My farm consisted of about twenty acres of excellent land, having given an hundred pounds for my predecessor's good will. Nothing could exceed the neatness of my little inclosures; the elms and hedge rows appearing with inexpressible beauty. My house consisted of but one story, and was covered with thatch, which gave it an air of great snugness; the walls on the inside were nicely whitewashed, and my daughters undertook to adorn them with pictures of their own designing. Though the same room served us for parlour and kitchen, that only made it the warmer. Besides, as it was kept with the utmost neatness, the plates, dishes, and copper, being well scoured, and all disposed in bright rows on the shelves, the eye was agreeably relieved.

and

and did not seem to want rich furniture. There were three other apartments, one for my wife and me, another for our two daughters, within our own; and the third, with two beds, for the rest of my children.

The little republic to which I gave laws, was regulated in the following manner: By sun rise we all assembled in our common apartment; the fire being previously kindled by the servant. After we had saluted each other with proper ceremony, (for I always thought fit to keep up some mechanical forms of good-breeding, without which freedom ever destroys friendship,) we all bent in gratitude to that Being who gave us another day. This duty being performed, my son and I went to pursue our usual industry abroad, while my wife and daughters employed themselves in providing breakfast, which was always ready at a certain time. I allowed half an hour for this meal, and an hour for dinner; which time was taken up in innocent mirth between my wife and daughters, and in philosophical arguments between my son and me.

As we rose with the sun, so we never pursued our labours after it was gone down, but returned home to the expecting family, where smiling looks, a neat hearth, and pleasant fire, were prepared for our reception. Nor were we without other guests: sometimes farmer Flamborough, our talkative neighbour, and often the blind piper would pay us a visit, and taste our gooseberry wine, for the making of which we had lost neither the receipt nor the reputation. These harmless people had several ways of being good company;

while

WAKEFIELD.

while one played the pipes, another would sing some soothing ballad, Johnny Armstrong's last good-night, or the cruelty of Barbara Allen. The night was concluded in the manner we began the morning, my youngest boys being appointed to read the lessons of the day; and he that read loudest, distinctest, and best, was to have an halfpenny on Sunday, to put in the poor's box.

When Sunday came, it was indeed a day of finery, which all my sumptuary edicts could not restrain. How well soever I fancied my lectures against pride had conquered the vanity of my daughters, yet I still found them secretly attached to all their former finery: They still loved laces, ribbands, bugles, and cat-gut; my wife herself retained a passion for her crimson paduafoy, because I formerly happened to say it became her.

The first Sunday, in particular, their behaviour served to mortify me: I had desired my girls the preceding night to be dressed early the next day; for I always loved to be at church a good while before the rest of the congregation. They punctually obeyed my directions; but when we were to assemble in the morning at breakfast, down came my wife and daughters, dressed out in all their former splendour; their hair plastered up with pomatum, their faces patched to taste, their trains bundled up into an heap behind, and rustling at every motion. I could not help smiling at their vanity, particularly that of my wife, from whom I expected more discretion: in this exigence, therefore,

therefore, my only resource was, to order my son, with an important air, to call our coach. The girls were amazed at the command; but I repeated it with more solemnity than before.—“Surely, my dear, you ‘jeft,’ cried my wife, “we can walk it perfectly well; “we want no coach to carry us now.” “You mi-“stake, child,” returned I, “we do want a coach; “for, if we walk to church in this trim, the very chil-“dren in the parish will hoot after us for a show.” “Indeed,” replied my wife, “I always imagined “that my Charles was fond of seeing his children “neat and handsome about him.”—“You may be as “neat as you please,” interrupted I, “and I shall love “you the better for it; but all this is not neatness, “but frippery. These rufflings, and pinkings, and “patchings, will only make us hated by all the wives “of all our neighbours. No, my children,” continued I, more gravely, “these gowns may be altered “into something of a plainer cut; for finery is very “unbecoming in us, who want the means of decency. “I do not know whether such flouncing and shred-“ding is becoming even in the rich, if we consider, “upon a moderate calculation, that the nakedness of “the indigent world may be clothed from the trim-“mings of the vain.”

This remonstrance had the proper effect; they went with great composure, that very instant, to change their dress; and the next day I had the satisfaction of finding my daughters, at their own request, employed in cutting up their trains into Sunday waistcoats for

Dick

Dick and Bill, the two little ones ; and, what was still more satisfactory, the gowns seemed improved by being thus curtailed.

C H A P. V.

A new and great acquaintance introduced. What we place most hopes upon, generally proves most fatal.

AT a small distance from the house, my predecessor had made a seat, overshadowed by an hedge of hawthorn and honeysuckle. Here, when the weather was fine, and our labour soon finished, we usually sat together, to enjoy an extensive landscape, in the calm of the evening. Here, too, we drank tea, which now was become an occasional banquet ; and, as we had it but seldom, it diffused a new joy, the preparations for it being made with no small share of bustle and ceremony. On these occasions, our two little ones always read for us, and they were regularly served after we had done. Sometimes, to give a variety to our amusements, the girls sung to the guitar ; and while they thus formed a little concert, my wife and I would stroll down the sloping field, that was embellished with blue bells and centaury, talk of our children with rapture, and enjoy the breeze that wasted both health and harmony.

In this manner, we began to find, that every situation in life might bring its own peculiar pleasures: every morning waked us to a repetition of toil; but the evening repaid it with vacant hilarity.

It was about the beginning of Autumn, on a holiday, (for I kept such as intervals of relaxation from labour,) that I had drawn out my family to our usual place of amusement, and our young musicians began their usual concert. As we were thus engaged, we saw a stag bound nimbly by, within about twenty paces of where we were sitting, and, by its panting, it seemed pressed by the hunters. We had not much time to reflect upon the poor animal's distress, when we perceived the dogs and horsemen come sweeping along at some distance behind, and making the very path it had taken. I was instantly for returning in with my family; but either curiosity or surprise, or some more hidden motive, held my wife and daughters to their seats. The huntsman, who rode foremost, passed us with great swiftness, followed by four or five persons more, who seemed in equal haste. At last, a young gentleman, of a more genteel appearance than the rest, came forward, and for a while regarding us, instead of pursuing the chace, stopped short, and giving his horse to a servant who attended, approached us with a careless superior air. He seemed to want no introduction, but was going to salute my daughters, as one certain of a kind reception; but they had early learnt the lesson of looking presumption out of countenance. Upon which, he let us know that his name

was

was Thornhill, and that he was owner of the estate that lay for some extent round us. He again, therefore, offered to salute the female part of the family; and such was the power of fortune and fine clothes, that he found no second repulse. As his address, though confident, was easy, we soon became more familiar; and perceiving musical instruments lying near, he begged to be favoured with a song. As I did not approve of such disproportioned acquaintances, I winked upon my daughters, in order to prevent their compliance; but my hint was counteracted by one from their mother; so that, with a cheerful air, they gave us a favourite song of Dryden's. Mr. Thornhill seemed highly delighted with their performance and choice, and then took up the guitar himself. He played but very indifferently; however, my eldest daughter repaid his former applause with interest, and assured him, that his tones were louder than even those of her master. At this compliment he bowed, which she returned with a curtsey. He praised her taste, and she commended his understanding. An age could not have made them better acquainted: While the fond mother, too, equally happy, insisted upon her landlord's stepping in and tasting a glass of her gooseberry. The whole family seemed earnest to please him: my girls attempted to entertain him with topics they thought most modern, while Moses, on the contrary, gave him a question or two from the ancients; for which he had the satisfaction of being laughed at; for he always ascribed to his wit that laughter which was

lavished at his simplicity: my little ones were no less busy, and fondly stuck close to the stranger. All my endeavours could scarce keep their dirty fingers from handling and tarnishing the lace on his clothes, and lifting up the flaps of his pocket-holes, to see what was there. At the approach of evening, he took his leave; but not till he had requested permission to renew his visit; which, as he was our landlord, we most readily agreed to.

As soon as he was gone, my wife called a council on the conduct of the day. She was of opinion, that it was a most fortunate hit; for, that she had known even stranger things at last brought to bear. She hoped again to see the day in which we might hold up our heads with the best of them; and concluded, she protested she could see no reason why the two Miss Wrinklers should marry great fortunes, and her children get none. As this last argument was directed to me, I protested I could see no reason for it neither, nor why one got the ten thousand pound prize in the lottery, and another sat down with a blank. "But those," added I, "who either aim at husbands greater than themselves, or at the ten thousand pound prize, have been fools for their ridiculous claims, whether successful or not." "I protest," Charles," cried my wife, "this is the way you always damp my girls and me, when we are in spirits. Tell me, Sophia, my dear, what do you think of our new visitor? Don't you think he seemed to be good-natured?" "Immensely so, indeed, Mamma,

replic

replied she. "I think he has a great deal to say upon
" every thing, and is never at a loss; and the more
" trifling the subject, the more he has to say; and,
" what is more, I protest he is very handsome."
" Yes," cried Olivia, "he is well enough for a man;
" but for my part, I don't much like him, he is so
" extremely impudent and familiar; but on the guitar
" he is shocking." These two last speeches I interpreted by contraries. I found by this, that Sophia internally despised, as much as Olivia secretly admired him. "Whatever may be your opinions of him, my
" children," cried I, "to confess a truth, he has not
" prepossessed me in his favour. Disproportioned
" friendships ever terminate in disgust; and I thought,
" notwithstanding all his case, that he seemed perfectly
" sensible of the distance between us. Let us keep to
" companions of our own rank. There is no character
" among men more contemptible than that of a
" fortune-hunter; and I can see no reason why for-
" tune-hunting women should not be contemptible
" too. Thus, at best, it will be contempt if his views
" are honourable: but, if they are otherwise! I should
" shudder but to think of that; for, though I have
" no apprehensions from the conduct of my children,
" I think there are some from his character." I would
have proceeded, but for the interruption of a servant
from the Squire, who, with his compliments, sent us
a side of venison, and a promise to dine with us some
days after. This well-timed present pleaded more
powerfully in his favour than any thing I had to say

ould obviate. I therefore continued silent, satisfied with just having pointed out danger, and leaving it to their own discretion to avoid it. That virtue which requires to be ever guarded, is scarce worth the sentinel.

C H A P. VI.

The happiness of a country fire-side.

AS we carried on the former dispute with some degree of warmth, in order to accommodate matters, it was universally concluded upon, that we should have a part of the venison for supper, and the girls undertook the task with alacrity. "I am sorry," cried I, "that we have no neighbour or stranger to take a part in this good cheer: feasts of this kind acquire a double relish from hospitality."—"Bless me," cried my wife, "here comes our good friend Mr Burchell, that saved our Sophia, and that run you down fairly in the argument."—"Confute me in argument, child!" cried I, "you mistake there, my dear. I believe there are but few that can do that: I never dispute your abilities at making a goose pye, and I beg you'll leave argument to me."—As I spoke, poor Mr Burchell entered the house, and was welcomed by the family, who shook him heartily

by

by the hand, while little Dick officiously reached him a chair.

I was pleased with the poor man's friendship, for two reasons; because I knew that he wanted mine, and I knew him to be friendly as far as he was able. He was known in our neighbourhood by the character of the poor gentleman that would do no good when he was young, though he was not yet above thirty. He would, at intervals, talk with great good sense; but, in general, he was fondest of the company of children, whom he used to call harmleſs little men. He was famous, I found, for singing them ballads, and telling them stories; and seldom went without something in his pockets for them, a piece of gingerbread, or a halfpenny whistle. He generally came into our neighbourhood once a year, and lived upon the neighbour's hospitality. He sat down to supper among us, and my wife was not sparing of her gooseberry wine. The tale went round: he sung us old songs, and gave the children the story of the Buck of Beverland, with the history of Patient Grizel. The adventures of Catskin next entertained them, and then Fair Rosamond's bower. Our cock, which always crew at eleven, now told us it was time for repose; but an unforeseen difficulty started about lodging the stranger: all our beds were already taken up, and it was too late to send him to the next alehouse. In this dilemma, little Dick offered him his part of the bed, if his brother Moses would let him ly with him. "And I," cried Bill, "will give Mr Burchell my part,

" part, if my sisters will take me to theirs."—"Well done, my good children," cried I, "hospitality is one of the first Christian duties. The beast retires to its shelter, and the bird flies to its nest; but helpless man can only find refuge from his fellow-creature. The greatest stranger in this world was he that came to save it. He never had an house, as if willing to see what hospitality was left remaining amongst us. Deborah, my dear," cried I to my wife, "give those boys a lump of sugar each; and let Dick's be the largest, because he spoke first."

In the morning early I called out my whole family to help at saving an after-growth of hay, and our guest offering his assistance, he was accepted among the number. Our labours went on lightly; we turned the swath to the wind, I went foremost, and the rest followed in due succession. I could not avoid, however, observing the assiduity of Mr Burchell in assisting my daughter Sophia in her part of the task. When he had finished his own, he would join in hers, and enter into a close conversation: but I had too good an opinion of Sophia's understanding, and was too well convinced of her ambition, to be under any uneasiness from a man of broken fortune. When we were finished for the day, Mr Burchell was invited as on the night before; but he refused, as he was to ly that night at a neighbour's, to whose child he was carrying a whistle. When gone, our conversation at supper turned upon our late unfortunate guest. "What

“ a strong instance,” said I, “ is that poor man of
“ the miseries attending a youth of levity and extra-
“ vagance ! He by no means wants sense, which only
“ serves to aggravate his former folly. Poor forlorn
“ creature ! where are now the revellers, the flatter-
“ ers, that he could once inspire and command !
“ Gone, perhaps, to attend the bagnio pander, grown
“ rich by his extravagance. They once praised him,
“ and now they applaud the pander : their former
“ raptures at his wit, are now converted into sar-
“ casms at his folly ; he is poor, and perhaps de-
“ serves poverty ; for he has neither the ambition
“ to be independent, nor the skill to be useful.”
Prompted, perhaps, by some secret reasons, I deliver-
ed this observation with too much acrimony, which
my Sophia gently reproved. “ Whatsoever his for-
“ mer conduct may be, Pappa, his circumstances
“ should exempt him from censure now. His present
“ indigence is a sufficient punishment for former fol-
“ ly ; and I have heard my Pappa himself say, that
“ we should never strike our unnecessary blows at a
“ victim over whom Providence already holds the
“ scourge of its resentment.”—“ You are right,
“ Sophia,” cried my son Moses, “ and one of the an-
“ cients finely represents so malicious a conduct, by
“ the attempts of a rustic to flea Marfyas, whose skin,
“ the fable tells us, had been wholly stripped off by
“ another. Besides, I don’t know if this poor man’s
“ situation be so bad as my father would represent it.
We are not to judge of the feelings of others by

“ what

" what we might feel, if in their place. However
" dark the habitation of the mole is to our eyes, yet
" the animal itself finds the apartment sufficiently
" lightsome. And, to confess a truth, this man's mind
" seems fitted to his station; for I never heard any
" one more sprightly than he was to-day, when he
" conversed with you." This was said without the
least design; however, it excited a blush, which she
strove to cover by an affected laugh, assuring him that
she scarce took any notice of what he said to her; but
that she believed he might once have been a very fine
gentleman. The readiness with which she undertook
to vindicate herself, and her blushing, were symptoms
I did not internally approve; but I repressed my sus-
picions.

As we expected our landlord the next day, my wife
went to make the venison pasty; Moses sat reading,
while I taught the little ones: my daughters seemed
equally busy with the rest; and I observed them for a
good while cooking something over the fire. I at first
supposed they were assisting their mother; but little
Dick informed me, in a whisper, that they were making
a *wash* for the face. Washes of all kinds I had
a natural antipathy to; for I knew, that, instead of
mending the complexion, they spoiled it. I there-
fore approached my chair, by slow degrees, to the
fire, and grasping the poker, as if it wanted mend-
ing, seemingly by accident overturned the whole
composition, and it was too late to begin another.

C H A P. VII.

A town wit described. The dullest fellows may learn to be comical for a night or two.

WHEN the morning arrived on which we were to entertain our young landlord, it may be easily supposed what provisions were exhausted to make an appearance. It may also be conjectured, that my wife and daughters expanded their gayest plumage upon this occasion. Mr Thornhill came with a couple of friends, his chaplain and feeder. The servants, so were numerous, he politely ordered to the next house: but my wife, in the triumph of her heart, insisted on entertaining them all; for which, by the way, the family was pinched for three weeks after. As Mr Burchell had hinted to us the day before, that he was making some proposals of marriage to Miss Gilmot, my son George's former mistress, this a good deal damped the heartiness of his reception: but his evident, in some measure, relieved our embarrassment; for one of the company happening to mention her name, Mr Thornhill observed, with an oath, that he never knew any thing more absurd than calling such aught a beauty: "For, strike me ugly," continued he, "if I should not find as much pleasure in choosing my mistress by the information of a lamp un-

" der

THE VICAR OF

"der the clock at St Dunstan's." At this he laughed, and so did we:—The jests of the rich are ever successful. Olivia too could not avoid whispering, loud enough to be heard, that he had an infinite fund of humour.

After dinner, I began with my usual toast, the Church: for this I was thanked by the chaplain, as he said, the church was the only mistress of his affections.—“Come, tell us honestly, Frank,” said the Squire, with his usual archness, “suppose the church, “your present mistress, dressed in lawn sleevees on one “hand, and Miss Sophia, with no lawn about her, on “the other, which would you be for?” For both, “to be sure,” cried the chaplain.—“Right, Frank,” cried the Squire; “for, may this glass suffocate me, “but a fine girl is worth all the priestcraft in the na- “tion. For, what are tithes and tricks but an im- “position, all a confounded imposture? And I can “prove it.”—“I wish you would,” cried my son Moses, “and I think,” continued he, “that I “should be able to combat in the opposition.”— “Very well, Sir,” cried the Squire, who immediately smoked him, and winked on the rest of the company to prepare us for the sport, “if you are for a cool ar- “gument upon that subject, I am ready to accept the “challenge. And first, whether are you for managing “it analogically, or dialogically?” “I am for ma- “naging it rationally,” cried Moses, quite happy at being permitted to dispute. “Good again,” cried the Squire; “and firstly, of the first, I hope you will

“no

not deny, that whatever is, is. If you don't grant me that, I can go no farther."—"Why," returned Moses, "I think I may grant that, and make the best of it."—"I hope, too," returned the other, "you'll grant, that a part is less than the whole." "I grant that too," cried Moses, "it is but just and reasonable."—"I hope," cried the Squire, "you will not deny, that the two angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones."—"Nothing can be plainer," returned t'other, and looked round with his usual importance.—"Very well," cried the Squire, speaking very quick, "the premises being thus settled, I proceed to observe, that the concatenation of self-existences, proceeding in a reciprocal duplicate ratio, naturally produce a problematical dialogism, which, in some measure, proves, that the essence of spirituality may be referred to the second predicate."—"Hold, hold," cried the other, "I deny that: Do you think I can thus tamely submit to such heterodox doctrines?" "What," replied the Squire, as if in a passion, "not submit! Answer me one plain question: Do you think Aristotle right, when he says, that relatives are related?"—"Undoubtedly," replied the other. "If so, then," cried the Squire, "answer me directly to what I propose: Whether do you judge the analytical investigation of the first part of my enthymem deficient secundum quoad, or quoad minus? and give me your reasons too: give me your reasons, I say, directly."—"I protest," cried Moses,

Ses, " I don't rightly comprehend the force of your reasoning ; but if it be reduced to one simple position, I fancy it may then have an answer." — " O Sir," cried the Squire, " I am your most humble servant ; I find you want me to furnish you with arguments and intellects both. No, Sir ; there, I protest, you are too hard for me." This effectually raised the laugh against poor Moses, who sat the only dismal figure in a group of merry faces : nor did he offer a single syllable more during the whole entertainment.

But though all this gave me no pleasure, it had a very different effect upon Olivia, who mistook this humour, which was a mere act of the memory, for real wit. She thought him, therefore, a very fine gentleman ; and such as consider what powerful ingredients a good figure, fine clothes, and fortune are, in that character, will easily forgive her. Mr Thornhill, notwithstanding his real ignorance, talked with ease, and could expatiate upon the common topics of conversation with fluency. It is not surprising, then, that such talents should win the affections of a girl, who, by education, was taught to value an appearance in herself, and consequently to set a value upon it when found in another.

Upon his departure, we again entered into a debate upon the merits of our young landlord. As he directed his looks and conversation to Olivia, it was no longer doubted but that she was the object that induced him to be our visitor. Nor did she seem to be much displeased

displeased at the innocent raillery of her brother and sister upon this occasion. Even Deborah herself seemed to share the glory of the day, and exulted in her daughter's victory as if it were her own. "And now, " my dear," cried she to me, " I'll fairly own that it was I that instructed my girls to encourage our landlord's addresses. I had always some ambition; " and you now see that I was right; for, who knows " how this may end?" " Ay, who knows that indeed?" answered I, with a groan: " for my part, I don't much like it: and I could have been better pleased with one that was poor and honest, than this fine gentleman, with his fortune and infidelity; for, depend on't, if he be what I suspect him, no free-thinker shall ever have a child of mine."

" Sure, father," cried Moses, " you are too severe in this; for Heaven will never arraign him for what he thinks, but for what he does. Every man has a thousand vicious thoughts, which arise without his power to suppress. Thinking freely of religion may be involuntary with this gentleman: so that, allowing his sentiments to be wrong, yet, as he is purely passive in their reception, he is no more to be blamed for their incursions, than the governor of a city without walls, for the shelter he is obliged to afford an invading enemy."

" True, my son," cried I; " but if the governor invites the enemy, there he is justly culpable. And such is always the case with those who embrace error. The vice does not lie in assenting to the proofs,

“ they see ; but in being blind to many of the proofs
“ that offer. Like corrupt judges on a bench, they
“ determine right on that part of the evidence they
“ hear ; but they will not hear all the evidence. Thus,
“ my son, though our erroneous opinions be involun-
“ tary when formed, yet, as we have been wilfully
“ corrupt, or very negligent in forming them, we de-
“ serve punishment for our vice, or contempt for our
“ folly.”

My wife now kept up the conversation, though not the argument : she observed, that several very prudent men of our acquaintance were free-thinkers, and made very good husbands ; and she knew some sensible girls that had skill enough to make converts of their spouses : “ And who knows, my dear,” continued she, “ what Olivia may be able to do ? The girl has a great deal to say upon every sub-
“ ject ; and, to my knowledge, is very well skilled in
“ controversy.”

“ Why, my dear, what controversy can she have
“ read,” cried I. “ It does not occur to my me-
“ mory that I ever put such books into her hands :
“ you certainly over-rate her merit.” — “ Indeed,
“ Pappa,” replied Olivia, “ she does not : I have
“ read a great deal of controversy. I have read the
“ disputes between Thwackum and Square ; the con-
“ troversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday the
“ savage ; and I am now employed in reading the
“ controversy in Religious Courtship.” — “ Very well,”
cried I, “ that’s a good girl : I find you are per-
“ fectly

"fertily qualified for making converts ; and so
"go help your mother to make the gooseberry-
"pye."

C H A P. VIII.

*An amour, which promises little good fortune, yet may
be productive of much.*

THE next morning we were again visited by Mr Burchell, though I began, for certain reasons, to be displeased with the frequency of his return ; but I could not refuse him my company and fire-side. It is true, his labour more than requited his entertainment ; for he wrought among us with vigour ; and, either in the meadow or at the hay-rick, put himself foremost. Besides, he had always something amusing to say that lessened our toil ; and was at once so out of the way, and yet so sensible, that I loved, laughed at, and pitied him. My only dislike arose from an attachment he discovered to my daughter : he would, in a jesting manner, call her his little mistress ; and when he brought each of the girls a set of ribbands, hers was the finest. I knew not how, but he every day seemed to become more amiable, his wit to improve, and his simplicity to assume the superior airs of wisdom.

Our family dined in the field, and we sat, or rather reclined, round a temperate repast, our cloth spread upon the hay, while Mr Burchell seemed to give cheerfulness to the feast. To heighten our satisfaction, two blackbirds answered each other from opposite hedges; the familiar redbreast came and pecked the crumbs from our hands; and every sound seemed but the echo of tranquillity. "I never sit thus," says Sophia, "but I think of the two lovers, so sweetly described by Mr Gay, who were struck dead in each others arms, under a barley mow. There is something so pathetic in the description, that I have read it an hundred times with new rapture." "In my opinion," cried my son, "the finest strokes in that description are much below those in the *Acis and Galatea* of Ovid. The Roman poet understands the use of *contrast* better; and upon that figure, artfully managed, all strength in the pathetic depends." "It is remarkable," cried Mr Burchell, "that both the poets you mention, have equally contributed to introduce a false taste into their respective countries, by loading all their lines with epithet. Men of little genius found them most easily imitated in their defects: and English poetry, like that in the later empire of Rome, is nothing, at present, but a combination of luxuriant images, without plot or connection; a string of epithets, that improve the sound without carrying on the sense. But perhaps, Madam, while I thus reprehend others, you will think it just that I should give them an opportunity

"to

“ to retaliate ; and, indeed, I have made this remark,
“ only to have an opportunity of introducing to the
“ company a ballad, which, whatever be its other de-
“ fects, is, I think at least, free from those I have
“ mentioned.”

A BALLAD

“ TURN, gentle hermit of the dale,
“ And guide my lonely way
“ To where yon taper cheers the vale
“ With hospitable ray.

“ For here forlorn and lost I tread,
“ With fainting steps and slow ;
“ Where wilds, immeasurably spread,
“ Seem lengthening as I go.”

“ Forbear, my son,” the hermit cries,
“ To tempt the dangerous gloom ;
“ For yonder phantom only flies,
“ To lure thee to thy doom.

“ Here, to the houseless child of want,
“ My door is open still ;
“ And though my portion is but scant,
“ I give it with good-will.

“ Then turn to-night, and freely share
“ Whate'er my cell bestows ;
“ My rushy couch, and frugal fare,
“ My blessing and repose.

“ No

THE VICAR OF

“ No flocks that range the valley free,
“ To slaughter I condemn ;
“ Taught by that Pow’r that pities me,
“ I learn to pity them.

“ But from the mountain’s grassy side,
“ A guiltless feast I bring ;
“ A scrip with herbs and fruits supply’d,
“ And water from the spring.

“ Then, pilgrim, turn, thy cares forego ;
“ For earth-born cares are wrong :
“ Man wants but little here below,
“ Nor wants that little long.”

Soft as the dew from heav’n descends,
His gentle accents fell :
The grateful stranger lowly bends,
And follows to the cell.

Far shelter’d in a glade obscure
The modest mansion lay ;
A refuge to the neighbouring poor,
And strangers led astray.

No stores beneath its humble thatch
Requir’d a master’s care ;
The door just opening with a latch,
Receiv’d the harmless pair.

WAKEFIELD.

49

And now, when worldly crowds retire,
To revels or to rest,
The hermit trimm'd his little fire,
And cheer'd his pensive guest :

And spread his vegetable store,
And gayly press'd, and smil'd ;
And, skill'd in legendary lore,
The lingering hours beguil'd.

Around in sympathetic mirth
Its tricks the kitten tries ;
The cricket chirrups in the hearth ;
The crackling faggot flies.

But nothing could a charm impart
To soothe the stranger's wo ;
For grief was heavy at his heart,
And tears began to flow.

His rising cares the hermit spy'd,
With answering care opprest :
" And whence, unhappy youth," he cry'd,
" The sorrows of thy breast ?

" From better habitations spurn'd,
" Reluctant dost thou rove ?
" Or grieve for friendship unreturn'd,
" Or unregarded love ?

" Alas !

“ Alas ! the joys that fortune brings,
“ Are trifling, and decay :
“ And those who prize the paltry things,
“ More trifling still than they.

“ And what is friendship, but a name,
“ A charm that lulls to sleep ;
“ A shade that follows wealth or fame,
“ But leaves the wretch to weep ?

“ And love is still an emptier sound,
“ The haughty fair one’s jest :
“ On earth unseen, or only found
“ To warm the turtle’s nest.

“ For shame, fond youth, thy sorrows hush,
“ And spurn the sex,” he said :
But while he spoke, a rising blush
The bashful guest betray’d.

He sees unnumber’d beauties rise,
Expanding to the view ;
Like clouds that deck the morning skies,
As bright, as transient too.

Her looks, her lips, her panting breast,
Alternate spread alarms :
The lovely stranger stands confess
A maid in all her charms.

And,

WAKEFIELD.

51

And, " Ah ! forgive a stranger rude,
" A wretch forlorn," she cry'd ;
" Whose feet unhallow'd thus intrude
" Where heav'n and you refide.

" But let a maid thy pity share,
" Whom love has taught to stray ;
" Who seeks for rest, but finds despair
" Companion of her way.

" My father liv'd beside the Tyne,
" A wealthy lord was he ;
" And all his wealth was mark'd as mine ;
" He had but only me.

" To win me from his tender arms,
" Unnumber'd suitors came,
" Who prais'd me for imputed charms,
" And felt, or feign'd a flame.

" Each morn the gay fantastic croud
" With richest proffers strove :
Among the rest, young Edwin bow'd,
" But never talk'd of love.

" In humble simplest habit clad,
" No wealth nor pow'r had he ;
A constant heart was all he had,
" But that was all to me.

" The

THE VICAR OF

“ The blossom opening to the day,

“ The dews of heaven refin'd,

“ Could nought of purity display,

“ To emulate his mind.

“ The dew, the blossom on the tree,

“ With charms inconstant shine;

“ Their charms were his, but, wo to me,

“ Their constancy was mine.

“ For still I try'd each fickle art,

“ Importunate and vain;

“ And, while his passion touch'd my heart,

“ I triumph'd in his pain.

“ Till quite dejected with my scorn,

“ He left me to my pride;

“ And sought a solitude forlorn,

“ In secret, where he dy'd.

“ But mine the sorrow, mine the fault,

“ And well my life shall pay;

“ I'll seek the solitude he sought,

“ And stretch me where he lay.

“ And there forlorn, despairing hid,

“ I'll lay me down and die:

“ 'Twas so for me that Edwin did,

“ And so for him will I.”

¶ Thou

“ Thou shalt not thus—” the hermit cry’d,
And clasp’d her to his breast :
The wond’ring fair one turn’d to chide ;
’Twas Edwin’s self that prest.

“ Turn, Angelina, ever dear,
“ My charmer, turn, to see
“ Thy own, thy long-lost Edwin here,
“ Restor’d to love and thee.

“ Thus let me hold thee to my heart,
“ And ev’ry care resign :
“ And shall we never, never part,
“ O thou——my all that’s mine ?

“ No, never, from this hour to part ;
“ We’ll live and love so true,
The sigh that rends thy constant heart,
“ Shall break thy Edwin’s too.”

While this ballad was reading, Sophia seemed to mix an air of tenderness with her approbation. But our tranquillity was soon disturbed by the report of a gun just by us, and, immediately after, a man was seen bursting through the hedge, to take up the game he had killed. This sportsman was the Squire’s chaplain, who had shot one of the blackbirds that so agreeably entertained us. So loud a report, and so near, startled my daughters ; and I could perceive, that Sophia, in the fright, had thrown herself into Mr Bur-

chell's arms for protection. The gentleman came up, and asked pardon for having disturbed us, affirming, that he was ignorant of our being so near. He therefore sat down by my youngest daughter, and, sportsman-like, offered her what he had killed that morning. She was going to refuse; but a private look from her mother soon induced her to correct the mistake, and accept his present, though with some reluctance. My wife, as usual, discovered her pride in a whisper; observing, that Sophia had made a conquest of the chaplain, as well as her sister had of the Squire. I suspected, however, with more probability, that her affections were placed upon a different object. The chaplain's errand was to inform us, that Mr Thornhill had provided music and refreshments, and intended, that night, giving the young ladies a ball by moon-light, on the grass-plot before our door. "Nor can I deny," continued he, "but I have an interest in being first to deliver this message, as I expect for my reward to be honoured with Miss Sophia's hand as a partner." To this my girl replied, that she should have no objection, if she could do it with honour: "But here," continued she, "is a gentleman," looking at Mr Burchell, "who has been my companion in the task for the day, and it is fit he should share in its amusements." Mr Burchell returned her a compliment for her intentions; but resigned her up to the chaplain, adding, that he was to go that night five miles, being invited to a harvest supper. His refusal appeared to me a little extraordinary; nor could I conceive how so sensible

girl as my youngest, could thus prefer a middle-aged man, of broken fortune, to a sprightly young fellow of twenty-two. But as men are most capable of distinguishing merit in women, so the ladies often form the truest judgments upon us. The two sexes seem placed as spies upon each other, and are furnished with different abilities, adapted for mutual inspection.

C H A P. IX.

Two ladies of great distinction introduced. Superior finery ever seems to confer superior breeding.

MR BURCHELL had scarce taken leave, and Sophia consented to dance with the chaplain, when my little ones came running out to tell us that the Squire was come, with a crowd of company. Upon our return, we found our landlord, with a couple of under-gentlemen, and two young ladies richly dressed, whom he introduced as women of very great distinction and fashion from town. We happened not to have chairs enough for the whole company; but Mr Thornhill immediately proposed, that every gentleman should sit in a lady's lap. This I positively objected to, notwithstanding a look of disapprobation from my wife. Moses was therefore dispatched to borrow a couple of chairs; and, as we were in want of ladies also to make up a set at country dances,

the two gentlemen went with him in quest of a couple of partners. Chairs and partners were soon provided. The gentlemen returned with my neighbour Flamborough's rosy daughters, flaunting with red top knots. But there was an unlucky circumstance which was not adverted to: though the Miss Flamboroughs were reckoned the very best dancers in the parish, and understood the jig and the round-about to perfection, yet they were totally unacquainted with country-dances. This at first discomposed us; however, after a little shoving and dragging, they began to go merrily on. Our music consisted of two fiddles, with a pipe and tabor. The moon shone bright. Mr Thornhill and my eldest daughter led up the ball, to the great delight of the spectators; for the neighbours, hearing what was going forward, came flocking about us. My girl moved with so much grace and vivacity, that my wife could not avoid discovering the pride of her heart, by assuring me, that, though the little chit did it so cleverly, all the steps were stolen from herself. The ladies of the town strove hard to be equally easy, but without success. They swam, sprawled, languished, and frisked; but all would not do: the gazers, indeed, owned that it was fine; but neighbour Flamborough observed, that Miss Livy's feet seemed as pale to the music as its echo. After the dance had continued about an hour, the two ladies, who were apprehensive of catching cold, moved to break up the ball. One of them, I thought, expressed her sentiments upon this occasion in a very coarse manner, when she observed,

ed, that, by the *living jingo*, she was all of a muck of sweat. Upon our return to the house, we found a very elegant cold supper, which Mr Thornhill had ordered to be brought with him. The conversation, at this time, was more reserved than before. The two ladies threw my girls quite into the shade; for they would talk of nothing but high life, and high-lived company, with other fashionable topics; such as pictures, taste, Shakespeare, and the musical glasses. (It is true, they once or twice mortified us sensibly, by dropping out an oath; but that appeared to me as the first symptom of their distinction, (though I am since informed, that swearing is now perfectly unfashionable.) Their finery, however, threw a veil over any coarseness in their conversation. My daughters seemed to regard their superior accomplishments with envy; and what appeared amiss, was ascribed to tip-top quazzy breeding. But the condescension of the ladies was all superior to their other accomplishments. One of them observed, that had Miss Olivia seen a little more of the world, it would greatly improve her. To which other added, that a single winter in town would make her little Sophia quite another thing. My wife warmly assented to both; adding, that there was nothing she more ardently wished, than to give her girls a single winter's polishing. To this I could not help saying, that their breeding was already superior to their fortune; and that greater refinement would only serve to make their poverty ridiculous, and give them a taste for pleasures they had no right to possess. —

" And what pleasures," cried Mr. Thornhill, " do
" they not deserve, who have so much in their power
" to bestow? As for my part," continued he, " my
" fortune is pretty large; love, liberty, and pleasure
" are my maxims; but curse me, if a settlement of
" half my estate could give my charming Olivia plea-
" sure, it should be hers; and the only favour I would
" ask in return would be, to add myself to the bene-
" fit." I was not such a stranger to the world, as to
be ignorant that this was the fashionable cant to dis-
guise the insolence of the basest proposal; but I made
an effort to suppress my resentment. " Sir," cried I,
" the family which you now condescend to favour
" with your company, has been bred with as nice a
" sense of honour as you. Any attempts to injure
" that, may be attended with very dangerous con-
" sequences. Honour, Sir, is our only possession
" present; and, of that last treasure, we must be par-
" ticularly careful." — I was soon sorry for the warmth
with which I had spoken this, when the young gentle-
man, grasping my hand, swore he commended my
spirit, though he disapproved my suspicions. " As
" your present hint," continued he, " I protest the
" thing was farther from my heart than such a
" thought. No; by all that's tempting, the virtue
" that will stand a regular siege was never to be
" taste; for all my amours are carried by a coup
" main."

The two ladies, who affected to be ignorant of the
rest, seemed highly displeased with this last stroke of
freedom.

freedom, and began a very discreet and serious dialogue upon virtue; in this my wife, the chaplain, and I, soon joined; and the Squire himself was at last brought to confess a sense of sorrow for his former excesses. We talked of the pleasures of temperance, and the sunshine in the mind unpolluted with guilt. I was well pleased that my little ones were kept up beyond the usual time, to be edified by such good conversation. Mr Thornhill even went beyond me, and demanded, if I had any objection to giving prayers. I joyfully embraced the proposal; and in this manner the night was passed in a most comfortable way, till at last the company began to think of retiring. The ladies seemed very unwilling to part from my daughters, for whom they had conceived a particular affection, and joined in a request to have the pleasure of their company home. The Squire seconded the proposal, and my wife added her intreaties; the girls, too, looked upon me as if they wished to go. In this perplexity, I made two or three excuses; which my daughters as readily removed; so that, at last, I was obliged to give a peremptory refusal; for which, we ad nothing but fullen looks and short answers the whole day ensuing.

C H A P. X.

The family endeavours to cope with their betters. The miseries of the poor, when they attempt to appear above their circumstances.

I now began to find, that all my long and painful lectures upon temperance, simplicity, and contentment, were entirely disregarded. The distinctions lately paid us by our betters awaked that pride which I had laid asleep, but not removed. Our windows now again, as formerly, were filled with washes for the neck and face. The sun was dreaded as an enemy to the skin without doors, and the fire as a spoiler of the complexion within. My wife observed, that rising too early would hurt her daughter's eyes; that working after dinner would redden their noses; and convinced me, that the hands never looked so white as when they did nothing. Instead, therefore, of finishing George's shirts, we now had them new-modelling their old gauzes, or flourishing upon catgut. The poor Miss Flamboroughs, their former gay companions, were cast off as mean acquaintance; and the whole conyversation ran upon high life, and high-lived company, with pictures, taste, Shakespeare, and the musical glasses.

But we could have borne all this, had not a fortune-telling gipsey come to raise us into perfect sublimity.

WAKEFIELD.

mity. The tawny sybil no sooner appeared than my girls came running to me for a shilling a-piece, to toss her hand with silver. To say the truth, I was tired of being always wise, and could not help gratifying their request, because I loved to see them happy. I gave each of them a shilling; though, for the honour of the family, it must be observed, that they never went without money themselves, as my wife always generously let them have a guinea each to keep in their pockets, but with strict injunctions never to change it. After they had been closeted up with the fortune-teller for some time, I knew by their looks on their returning, that they had been promised something great.—“ Well, my girls, how have you sped? Tell me, Livy, has the fortune-teller given thee a pennyworth?”—“ I protest, pappa,” says a girl with a serious face, “ I believe she deals with somebody that’s not right; for she positively declared, that I am to be married to a great Squire in less than a twelvemonth.”—“ Well, now, Sophy, my child,” said I, “ and what sort of a husband are you to have?—“ Sir,” replied she, “ I am to have a lord soon after my sister has been married to the Squire.”—“ How,” cried I, “ is that all you are to have for your two shillings? Only a lord and squire for two shillings? You fools, I could have promised you a prince and a nabob for half the money.”

This curiosity of theirs, however, was attended with very serious effects: we now began to think ourselves

ourselves designed by the Stars for something exalted and already anticipated our future grandeur.

It has been a thousand times observed, and I may observe it once more, that the hours we pass with happy prospects in view, are more pleasing than those crowded with fruition. In the first case, we cook the dinner to our own appetite ; in the latter, nature cooks it for us. It is impossible to repeat the train of agreeable reveries we called up for our entertainment. We looked upon our fortunes as once more rising ; and the whole parish asserted that the Squire was in love with my daughter, she was actually so with him ; so they persuaded her into passion. In this agreeable interval, my wife had the most lucky dreams in the world, which she took care to tell us every morning with great solemnity and exactness. It was one night a coffin and cross bones ; the sign of an approaching wedding : at another time, she imagined her daughter's pockets filled with farthings ; a certain sign of their being one day stuffed with gold. The girls had their omens too : they felt strange kisses on their lips ; they saw rings in the candle ; purses borrowed from the fire ; and true-love knots lurked at the bottom of every tea cup.

Towards the end of the week we received a card from the town ladies ; in which, with their compliments, they hoped to see all our family at church on Sunday following. All Saturday morning I could perceive, in consequence of this, my wife and daughters in close conference together, and now and then

glancing

ncing at me, with looks that betrayed a latent
t. To be sincere, I had strong suspicions that
ne absurd proposal was preparing for appearing
h splendour the next day. In the evening, they
an their operations in a very regular manner;
my wife undertook to conduct the siege. After
, when I seemed in spirits, she began thus: "I
ancy, Charles, my dear, we shall have a great
deal of good company at our church to-morrow."—
"Perhaps, we may, my dear," returned I; "tho'
you need be under no uneasiness about that; you
shall have a sermon whether there be or not."—
"That is what I expect," returned she; "but I think,
my dear, we ought to appear there as decently as
possible; for, who knows what may happen?"—
"our precautions," replied I, "are highly com-
mendable. A decent behaviour and appearance in
church is what charms me. We should be devout
and humble, cheerful and serene."—"Yes," cried
"I know that; but I mean, we should go there
as proper a manner as possible; not altogether
like the scrubs about us."—"You are quite right,
my dear," returned I, "and I was going to make
the very same proposal. The proper manner of going,
is to go there as early as possible, to have time for
meditation before the service begins."—"Phoo,
Charles," interrupted she, "all that is very true;
but not what I would be at. I mean, we should
go there genteelly. You know the church is two
miles off; and I protest I don't like to see my daugh-
ters

"ters trudging up to their pew all blowzed and red
" with walking, and looking, for all the world, as if
" they had been winners at a smock-race. Now, my
" dear, my proposal is this: there are our two plough
" horses, the Colt that has been in our family these
" nine years, and his companion Blackberry, that
" have scarce done an earthly thing for this month
" past, and are both grown fat and lazy. Why
" should not they do something as well as we? And,
" let me tell you, when Moses has trimmed them a
" little, they will not be so contemptible."

To this proposal I objected, that walking would be twenty times more genteel than such a paltry conveyance, as Blackberry was wall-eyed, and the Colt wanted a tail; that they had never been broke to the rein, but had an hundred vicious tricks; and that we had but one saddle and pillion in the whole house. All these objections, however, were over-ruled; so that I was obliged to comply. The next morning I perceived them not a little busy in collecting such materials as might be necessary for the expedition: but as I found it would be a business of much time, I walked on to the church before, and they promised speedily to follow. I waited near an hour in the reading-desk for their arrival; but not finding them come, as expected, I was obliged to begin, and went through the service, not without some uneasiness at finding them absent. This was increased, when all was finished, and no appearance of the family. I therefore walked back by the horse-way, which was five miles round, though

the

WAKEFIELD.

61

the foot-way was but two; and, when got about half way home, perceived the procession marching slowly forward towards the church; my son, my wife, and the two little ones exalted upon one horse, and my two daughters upon the other. I demanded the cause of their delay; but I soon found, by their looks, they had met with a thousand misfortunes on the road. The horses had at first refused to move from the door, till Mr Burchell was kind enough to beat them forward, for about two hundred yards, with his cudgel. Next, the straps of my wife's pillion broke down, and they were obliged to stop to repair them before they could proceed. After that, one of the horses took it into his head to stand still; and neither blows nor intreaties could prevail with him to proceed. It was just recovering from this dismal situation that I found them; but perceiving every thing safe, I own their present mortification did not much displease me, as it might give me many opportunities of future triumph, and teach my daughters more humility.

VOL. I.

F

CHAP.

C H A P. XI.

The family still resolve to hold up their heads.

MICHAELMAS-EVE happening on the next day, we were invited to burn nuts, and play tricks at neighbour Flamborough's. Our late mortifications had humbled us a little, or it is probable we might have rejected such an invitation with contempt. However, we suffered ourselves to be happy. Our honest neighbour's goose and dumplings were fine; and the lambs-wool, even in the opinion of my wife, who was a connoisseur, was thought excellent. It is true, his manner of telling stories was not quite so well. They were very long, and very dull, and all about himself, and we had laughed at them ten times before: however, we were kind enough to laugh at them once more.

Mr Burchell, who was of the party, was always fond of seeing some innocent amusement going forward, and set the boys and girls to blind-man's buff. My wife, too, was perfuaded to join in the diversion; and it gave me pleasure to think that she was not yet too old. In the mean time, my neighbour and I looked on, laughed at every feat, and praised our own dexterity when we were young. Hot cockles succeeded

succeeded next, questions and commands followed that; and, last of all, they sat down to hunt the slipper. As every person may not be acquainted with this primeval pastime, it may be necessary to observe, that the company, at this play, plant themselves in a ring upon the ground, all except one, who stands in the middle, whose business it is to catch a shoe, which the company shove about under their hams, from one to another, something like a weaver's shuttle. As it is impossible, in this case, for the lady who is up to face all the company at once, the great beauty of the play lies in hitting her a thump with the heel of the shoe on that side least capable of making a defence. It was in this manner that my eldest daughter was hemmed in, and thumped about, all blowzed, in spirits, and bawling for fair play, fair play, with a voice that might deafen a ballad-singer; when, confusion on confusion, who should enter the room but our two great acquaintances from town, Lady Blarney and Miss Carolina Wilelmina Amelia Skeggs! Description would but beggar, therefore it is unnecessary to describe, this new mortification. Death! to be seen by ladies of such high breeding in such vulgar attitudes! Nothing better could ensue from such a vulgar play of Mr Flamborough's proposing. We seemed struck to the ground for some time, as if actually petrified with amazement.

The two ladies had been at our house to see us, and finding us from home, came after us hither, as they were uneasy to know what accident could have kept

us from church the day before. Olivia undertook to be our prolocutor, and delivered the whole in a summary way, only saying, "We were thrown from our 'horses.'" At which account the ladies were greatly concerned; but being told the family received no hurt, they were extremely glad: but being informed that we were almost killed by the fright, they were vastly sorry; but hearing that we had a very good night, they were extremely glad again. Nothing could exceed their complaisance to my daughters; their professions the last evening were warm, but now they were ardent. They protested a desire of having a more lasting acquaintance. Lady Blarney was particularly attached to Olivia; Miss Carolina Wilemina Amelia Skeggs (I love to give the whole name) took a greater fancy to her sister. They supported the conversation between themselves, while my daughters sat silent, admiring their exalted breeding. But, as every reader, however beggarly himself, is fond of high lived dialogues, with anecdotes of Lords, Ladies, and Knights of the Garter, I must beg leave to give him the concluding part of the present conversation.

"All that I know of the matter," cried Miss Skeggs, "is this, that it may be true, or it may not be true; but this I can assure your Ladyship, that the whole rout was in amaze; his Lordship turned all manner of colours; my Lady fell into a swoon; but Sir Tomkyn, drawing his sword, swore he was hers to the last drop of his blood."

"Well"

WAKEFIELD.

“ Well,” replied our Peeress, “ this I can say, that the Duchefs never told me a syllable of the matter; and I believe her Grace would keep nothing a secret from me. But this you may depend upon as a fact, that the next morning my Lord Duke cried out three times to his valet-de-chambre, Jernigan, Jernigan, Jernigan, bring me my garters.”

But, previously, I should have mentioned the very impolite behaviour of Mr Burchell, who, during this discourse, sat with his face turned to the fire, and at the conclusion of every sentence, would cry out *fudge*; an expression which displeased us all, and, in some measure, damped the rising spirit of the conversation.

“ Besides, my dear Skeggs,” continued our Peeress, “ there is nothing of this in the copy of verses that Dr Burdock made upon the occasion.”

“ I am surprised at that,” cried Miss Skeggs; “ for he seldom leaves any thing out, as he writes only for his own amusement. But can your Ladyship favour me with a sight of them?”

“ My dear creature,” replied our Peeress, “ do you think I carry such things about me? Though they are very fine, to be sure, and I think myself something of a judge; at least, I know what pleases myself. Indeed, I was ever an admirer of all Dr Burdock’s little pieces: for, except what he does, and our dear Countess at Hanover-Square, there’s nothing comes out but the most lowest stuff in nature; not a bit of high life among them.”

“ Your Ladyship should except,” says t’other,
“ your own things in the Lady’s Magazine. I hope
“ you’ll say there’s nothing low-lived there; but I
“ suppose we are to have no more from that quarter.”
“ Why, my dear,” says the Lady, “ you know my
“ reader and companion has left me, to be married to
“ Captain Roch; and, as my poor eyes won’t suffer
“ me to write myself, I have been for some time look-
“ ing out for another. A proper person is no easy
“ matter to find; and, to be sure, thirty pounds a
“ year is a small stipend for a well-bred girl of cha-
“ racter, that can read, write, and behave in com-
“ pany; as for the chits about town, there is no bear-
“ ing them about one.”

“ That I know,” cried Miss Skeggs, “ by experi-
“ ence: for, of the three companions I had this lat-
“ half year, one of them refused to do plain work an-
“ hour in the day; another thought twenty-five gu-
“ neas a-year too small a salary; and I was obliged
“ to send away the third, because I suspected an in-
“ trigue with the chaplain. Virtue, my dear Lady
“ Blarney, virtue is worth any price; but where is
“ that to be found?”

My wife had been for a long time all attention to
this discourse; but was particularly struck with the
latter part of it. Thirty pounds and twenty-five gu-
neas a-year, made fifty-six pounds five shillings English
money; all which was, in a manner, going a begging;
and might easily be secured in the family. She for a
moment studied my looks for approbation; and, to

WAKEFIELD.

own a truth, I was of opinion, that two such places would fit our two daughters exactly. Besides, if the Squire had any real affection for my eldest daughter, this would be the way to make her every way qualified for her fortune. My wife, therefore, was resolved that we should not be deprived of such advantages for want of assurance ; and undertook to harangue for the family. " I hope," cried she, " your Ladyships will pardon my present presumption. It is true, we have no right to pretend to such favours ; but yet it is natural for me to wish putting my children forward in the world : and, I will be bold to say, my two girls have had a pretty good education, and capacity, at least the country can't show better. They can read, write, and cast accounts ; they understand their needle, breadstitch, cross and change, and all manner of plain work ; they can pink, point, and frill ; and know something of music ; they can do up small clothes ; work upon catgut : my eldest can cut paper ; and my youngest has a very pretty manner of telling fortunes upon the cards."

When she had delivered this pretty piece of eloquence, the two ladies looked at each other a few minutes in silence, with an air of doubt and importance. At last, Miss Carolina Wilemina Amelia Skeggs condescended to observe, that the young ladies, from the opinion she could form of them, from so slight an acquaintance, seemed very fit for such employments : " But a thing of this kind, Madam," cried she, addressing my spouse, " requires a thorough examination

" into

THE VICAR OF

" into characters, and a more perfect knowledge of
" each other. Not, Madam," continued she, " that I
" in the least suspect the young ladies virtue, prudence,
" and discretion ; but there is a form in these things,
" Madam, there is a form."

My wife approved her suspicions very much, ob-
serving, that she was very apt to be suspicious herself;
but referred her to all the neighbours for a character;
but this our Peeress declined as unnecessary, alledging,
that her cousin Thorahill's recommendation would be
sufficient; and upon this we rested our petition.

CHAP. XII.

*Fortune seems resolved to humble the family of Wake-
field. Mortifications are often more painful than real
calamities.*

WHEN we were returned home, the night was
dedicated to schemes of future conquest. De-
borah exerted much sagacity in conjecturing which of
the two girls was likely to have the best place, and
most opportunities of seeing good company. The
only obstacle to our preferment, was in obtaining the
Squire's recommendation ; but he had already shown
us too many instances of his friendship, to doubt of it
now. Even in bed, my wife kept up the usual theme :
" Well, faith, my dear Charles, between ourselves, I
" think

"think we have made an excellent day's work of it."— "Pretty well," cried I, not knowing what to say.— "What! only pretty well!" returned she, "I think it is very well. Suppose the girls should come to make acquaintances of taste in town! and this I am assured of, that London is the only place in the world for all manner of husbands. Besides, my dear, stranger things happen every day: and as ladies of quality are so taken with my daughters, what will not men of quality be! *Entre nous*, I protest I like my Lady Blarney vastly; so very obliging. However, Miss Carolina Wilemina Amelia Skeggs has my warm heart. But yet, when they came to talk of places in town, you saw at once how I nailed them. Tell me, my dear, don't you think I did for my children there?"— "Ay," returned I, not knowing well what to think of the matter; "Heaven grant they may be both the better for it this day three months!" This was one of those observations I usually made, to impress my wife with an opinion of my sagacity; for, if the girls succeeded, then it was a pious wish fulfilled; but if any thing unfortunate ensued, then it might be looked upon as prophecy. All this conversation, however, was only preparatory to another scheme; and, indeed, I dreaded as much. This was nothing less, than that, as we were now to hold up our heads a little higher in the world, it would be proper to sell the colt, which was grown old, at a neighbouring fair, and buy us an horse that would carry single or double upon an occasion, and make a

pretty

THE VICAR OF

pretty appearance at church, or upon a visit. This, at first, I opposed stoutly; but it was as stoutly defended. However, as I weakened, my antagonist gained strength, till at last it was resolved to part with him.

As the fair happened on the following day, I had intentions of going myself; but my wife persuaded me that I had got a cold; and nothing could prevail upon her to permit me from home. "No, my dear," said she, "our son Moses is a discreet boy, and can buy and sell to very good advantage; you know all our great bargains are of his purchasing. He always stands out, and higgles, and actually tires them, till he gets a bargain."

As I had some opinion of my son's prudence, I was willing enough to entrust him with this commission; and the next morning, I perceived his sisters mighty busy in fitting out Moses for the fair; trimming his hair, brushing his buckles, and cocking his hat with pins. The business of the toilet being over, we had at last the satisfaction of seeing him mounted upon the colt, with a deal box before him, to bring home groceries in. He had on a coat made of that cloth they call Thunder and-lightning; which, though grown too short, was much too good to be thrown away. His waistcoat was of gosling green; and his sisters had tied his hair with a broad black ribband. We all followed him several paces from the door, bawling after him, Good luck, good luck, till we could see him no longer.

He

He was scarce gone, when Mr. Thornhill's butler came to congratulate us upon our good fortune, saying, that he overheard his young master mention our names with great commendations.

Good fortune seemed resolved not to come alone. Another footman from the same family followed with a card for my daughters, importing, that the two ladies had received such pleasing accounts from Mr. Thornhill of us all, that, after a few previous inquiries more, they hoped to be perfectly satisfied.

"Ay," cried my wife, "I now see it is no easy matter to get into the families of the great; but when one once gets in, then, as Moses says, they may go sleep." To this piece of humour, for she intended it for wit, my daughters assented with a loud laugh of pleasure. In short, such was her satisfaction at his message, that she actually put her hand to her pocket, and gave the messenger sevenpence halfpenny.

This was to be our visiting-day. The next that came was Mr. Burchell, who had been at the fair. He brought my little ones a pennyworth of gingerbread each, which my wife undertook to keep for them, and give them by letters at a time. He brought my daughters also a couple of boxes, in which they might keep wafers, snuff, patches, or even honey, when they got it. My wife was usually fond of a weasel skin purse, as being the most lucky; but this by the bye. We had still a regard for Mr. Burchell, though his late rude behaviour was in some measure

measure displeasing ; nor could we now avoid communicating our happiness to him, and asking his advice : although we seldom followed advice, we were all ready enough to ask it. When he read the note from the two ladies, he shook his head, and observed, that an affair of this sort demanded the utmost circumspection.——This air of diffidence highly displeased my wife. “ I never doubted, Sir,” cried she, “ your readiness to be against my daughters and me. “ You have more circumspection than is wanted. “ However, I fancy, when we come to ask advice, we will apply to persons who seem to have made use of it themselves.”——“ Whatever my own conduct may have been, Madam,” replied he, “ is not the present question ; though, as I have made no use of advice myself, I should, in conscience, give it to those that will.”——As I was apprehensive this answer might draw on a repartee, making up by abuse what it wanted in wit, I hanged the subject, by seeming to wonder what could keep our son so long at the fair, as it was now almost night-fall.—“ Never mind our son,” cried my wife, “ depend upon it he knows what he is about. I’ll warrant we’ll never see him sell his hen of a rainy day. I have seen him buy such bargains as would amaze one. I’ll tell you a good story about that, that will make you split your sides with laughing.—But, as I live, yonder comes Moses, without an horse, and the box at his back.”

As she spoke, Moses came slowly on foot, and sweating under the deal-box, which he had strapt round his shoulders.—“Welcome, welcome, Moses; well, my boy, what have you brought us from the fair?”—“I have brought you myself,” cried Moses with a sly look, and resting the box on the dresser.—“Ay, Moses,” cried my wife, “that we know; but where is the horse?”—“I have sold him,” cried Moses, “for three pounds five shillings and two-pence.” “Well done, my good boy,” returned she, “I knew you would touch them off. Between ourselves, three pounds five shillings and twopence is no bad day’s work. Come, let us have it then.” “I have brought back no money,” cried Moses again, “I have laid it all out in a bargain; and here it is,” pulling out a bundle from his breast: “here they are; a gross of green spectacles, with silver rims, and shagreen cases.”—“A gross of green spectacles!” repeated my wife in a faint voice: “And you have parted with the colt, and brought us back nothing but a gross of green paltry spectacles!”—“Dear mother,” cried the boy, “why won’t you listen to reason? I had them a dead bargain, or I should not have bought them. The silver rims alone will sell for double the money.”—“A fig for the silver rims,” cried my wife in a passion; “I dare swear they won’t sell for above half the money at the rate of broken silver, five shillings an ounce.”—“You need be under no uneasiness,” cried I, “about selling the rims; for I perceive they are only cop-

"per, varnished over."—"What?" cried my wife,
"not silver, the rims not silver!" "No," cried I,
"no more silver than your sauce-pan."—"And
so," returned she, "we have parted with the colt,
and have only got a gross of green spectacles, with
copper rims, and shagreen cases? A murrain take
such trumpery. The blockhead has been imposed
upon, and should have known his company better."
"There, my dear," cried I, "you are wrong; he
should not have known them at all." "Marry, hang
the idiot," returned she again, "to bring me such
stuff; if I had them, I would throw them into the
fire."—"There again you are wrong, my dear,"
cried I; "for, though they be copper, we will keep
them by us; as copper spectacles, you know, are
better than nothing."

By this time the unfortunate Moses was undeceived.
He now saw that he had indeed been imposed upon by
a prowling sharper, who, observing his figure, had
marked him for an easy prey. I therefore asked the
circumstances of his deception. He sold the horse, it
seems, and walked the fair in search of another. A
reverend looking man brought him to a tent, under
a pretence of having one to sell. "Here," continu-
ed Moses, "we met another man, very well dressed,
who desired to borrow twenty pounds upon these
saying, that he wanted money, and would dispose
of them for a third of the value. The first gen-
tleman, who pretended to be my friend, whispered
me to buy them, and cautioned me not to let

"good

"good an offer pass. I sent for Mr Flamborough,
"and they talked him up as finely as they did me;
"and so, at last, we were persuaded to buy the two
"gross between us."

C H A P. XIII.

Mr Burchell is found to be an enemy; for he has the confidence to give disagreeable advice.

OUR family had now made several attempts to be fine; but some unforeseen disaster demolished each as soon as projected. I endeavoured to take the advantage of every disappointment, to improve their good sense, in proportion as they were frustrated in ambition. "You see, my children," cried I, "how little is to be got by attempts to impose upon the world, in coping with our betters. Such as are poor, and will associate themselves with none but the rich, are hated by those they avoid, and despised by those they follow. Unequal combinations are always disadvantageous to the weaker side: the rich having the pleasure, and the poor the inconveniences, that result from them. But come, Dick, my boy, and repeat the fable that you were reading to-day, for the good of the company."

“Once upon a time,” cried the child, “a giant and a dwarf were friends, and kept together. They made a bargain, that they would never forsake each other, but go seek adventures. The first battle they fought was with two Saracens; and the dwarf, who was very courageous, dealt one of the champions a most angry blow. It did the Saracen but very little injury, who, lifting up his sword, fairly struck off the poor dwarf’s arm. He was now in a woful plight; but the giant coming to his assistance, in a short time left the two Saracens dead on the plain; and the dwarf cut off the dead man’s head, out of spite. They then travelled on to another adventure: This was against three bloody-minded satyrs, who were carrying away a damsel in distress. The dwarf was not quite so fierce now as before; but, for all that, struck the first blow, which was returned by another that knocked out his eye: but the giant was soon up with them; and, had they not fled, would certainly have killed them every one. They were all very joyful for this victory, and the damsel who was relieved fell in love with the giant, and married him. They now travelled far, and farther than I can tell, till they met with a company of robbers. The giant, for the first time, was foremost now; but the dwarf was not far behind. The battle was stout and long. Wherever the giant came, all fell before him; but the dwarf had like to have been killed more than once. At last, the victory declared for the two adventurers;

WAKEFIELD.

venturers : but the dwarf lost his leg. The dwarf was now without an arm, a leg, and an eye ; while the giant, who was without a single wound, cried out to him, Come on, my little hero ; this is glorious sport ; let us get one victory more, and then we shall have honour for ever. No, cries the dwarf, who was by this time grown wiser, no, I declare off ; I'll fight no more ; for I find, that, in every battle, you get all the honour and rewards, but all the blows fall upon me."

I was going to moralize this fable, when our attention was called off to a warm dispute between my wife and Mr Burchell, upon my daughters intended expedition to town. My wife very strenuously insisted upon the advantages that would result from it. Mr Burchell, on the contrary, dissuaded her with great ardour, and I stood neuter. His present dissuasions seemed but the second part of those which were received with so ill a grace in the morning. The dispute grew high, while poor Deborah, instead of reasoning stronger, talked louder, and, at last, was obliged to take shelter from a defeat, in clamour. The conclusion of her harangue, however, was highly displeasing to us all : she knew, she said, of some who had their own secret reasons for what they advised ; but, for her part, she wished such to stay away from her house for the future. — — — " Madam," cried Burchell, with looks of great composure, which tended to inflame her the more, " as for secret reasons, you are right ; I have secret reasons, which I forbear to

"mention, because you are not able to answer those
"which I make no secret: but I find my visits ha-
"are become troublesome; I'll take my leave then
"fore now, and perhaps come once more, to take
"a final farewell, when I am quitting the coun-
"try." Thus saying, he took up his hat; nor could
the attempts of Sophia, whose looks seemed to un-
braid his precipitancy, prevent his going.

When gone, we all regarded each other for some minutes with confusion. My wife, who knew herself to be the cause, strove to hide her concern with a forced smile, and an air of assurance, which I was willing to reprove. "How, woman," cried I to her, "is it thus we treat strangers? is it thus we return their kindness? Be assured, my dear, that these were the harshest words, and to me the most unpleasing, that ever escaped your lips!"—"Why would he provoke me, then?" replied she; "but I know the motives of his advice perfectly well. He would prevent my girls from going to town that he might have the pleasure of my youngest daughter's company here at home. But, whatever happens, she shall choose better company than such low-liv'd scoundrels as he."—"Low-liv'd, my dear, do you call him?" cried I; "it is very possible we may mistake this man's character; for he seems upon some occasions the most finished gentleman I ever knew."—"Tell me, Sophia, my girl, has he ever given you any secret instances of his attachment?"—"His conversation with me, Sir," replied my daughter,

" has ever been sensible, modest, and pleasing ; as to
" aught else, no, never. Once, indeed, I remember
" to have heard him say, he never knew a woman who
" could find merit in a man that seemed poor."—
" Such, my dear," cried I, " is the common cant of
" all the unfortunate, or idle ; but I hope you have
" been taught to judge properly of such men, and
" that it would be even madness to expect happiness
" from one who has been so very bad an economist of
" his own. Your mother and I have now better pro-
" spects for you. The next winter, which you will
" probably spend in town, will give you opportunities
" of making a more prudent choice."

What Sophia's reflections were upon this occasion, I cannot pretend to determine ; but I was not displeased at the bottom, that we were rid of a guest from whom I had much to fear. Our breach of hospitality went to my conscience a little ; but I quickly silenced that monitor, by two or three specious reasons, which served to satisfy and reconcile me to myself. The pain which conscience gives the man who has already done wrong, is soon got over. Conscience is a coward ; and those faults it has not strength enough to prevent, it seldom has justice enough to punish by accusing.

THE VICAR OF

CHAP. XIV.

Fresh mortifications, or a demonstration, that seeming calamities may be real blessings.

THE journey of my daughters to town was now resolved upon, Mr Thornhill having kindly promised to inspect their conduct himself, and to inform us by letter of their behaviour. But it was thought indispensably necessary, that their appearance should equal the greatness of their expectations; which could not be done without some expence. We debated, therefore, in full council, what were the easiest methods of raising money, or, more properly speaking, what we could most conveniently sell. The deliberation was soon finished; it was found, that our remaining horse was utterly useless for the plough without his companion, and equally unfit for the road, as wanting an eye. It was therefore determined, that we should dispose of him, for the purposes above mentioned, at the neighbouring fair; and, to prevent imposition, that I should go with him myself. Though this was one of the first mercantile transactions of my life, yet I had no doubt about acquitting myself with reputation. The opinion a man forms of his own prudence is measured by that of the company he keeps: and

as mine was mostly in the family way, I had conceived no unfavourable sentiments of my worldly wisdom. My wife, however, next morning at parting, after I had got some paces from the door, called me back, to advise me, in a whisper, to have all my eyes about me.

I had, in the usual forms, when I came to the fair, put my horse through all his paces; but for some time had no bidders. At last a chapman approached, and, after he had for a good while examined the horse round, finding him blind of one eye, would have nothing to say to him: a second came up, but observing he had a spavin, declared he would not take him for the driving home: a third perceived he had a wind-gall, and would bid no money: a fourth knew by his eye that he had the botts: a fifth, more impertinent than all the rest, wondered what a plague I could do to the fair with a blind, spavined, galled hack, that was only fit to be cut up for a dog-kennel. By this time I began to have a most hearty contempt for the poor animal myself, and was almost ashamed at the approach of every new customer; for, though I did not entirely believe all that the fellows told me, yet I reflected, that the number of witnesses was a strong presumption they were right; and St Gregory, upon good works, professes himself to be of the same opinion.

I was in this mortifying situation, when a brother clergyman, an old acquaintance, who had also business to the fair, came up, and shaking me by the hand, proposed

proposed adjourning to a public-house, and taking a glass of whatever we could get. I readily closed with the offer, and entering an ale-house, we were shewn into a little back-room, where there was only a venerable old man, who sat wholly intent over a large book, which he was reading. I never in my life saw a figure that prepossessed me more favourably. His locks of silver grey venerably shaded his temples, and his green old age seemed to be the result of health and benevolence. However, his presence did not interrupt our conversation; my friend and I discoursed on the various turns of fortune we had met; the Whitonian controversy, my last pamphlet, the archdeacon's reply, and the hard measure that was dealt me. But our attention was in a short time taken off, by the appearance of a youth, who, entering the room, respectfully said something softly to the old stranger. "Make no apologies, my child," said the old man; "to do good is a duty we owe to all our fellow-creatures. Take this, I wish it were more; but five pounds will relieve your distress, and you are welcome." The modest youth shed tears of gratitude, and yet his gratitude was scarce equal to mine. I could have hugged the good old man in my arms, his benevolence pleased me so. He continued to read, and we resumed our conversation, until my companion, after some time recollecting that he had business to transact in the fair, promised to be soon back, adding, that he always desired to have as much of Dr Primrose's company as possible. The old gentleman, hearing my name mentioned,

tioned, seemed to look at me with attention; and, when my friend was gone, most respectfully demanded, if I was any way related to the great Primrose, that courageous monogamist, who had been the bulwark of the church. Never did my heart feel sincerer rapture than at that moment. "Sir," cried I, "the applause of so good a man, as I am sure you are, adds to that happiness in my breast which your benevolence has already excited. You behold before you, Sir, that Dr Primrose, the monogamist, whom you have been pleased to call great. You here see that unfortunate divine, who has so long, and it would ill become me to say, successfully fought against the deuterogamy of the age." "Sir," cried the stranger, struck with awe, "I fear I have been too familiar; but you'll forgive my curiosity, Sir: I beg pardon." "Sir," cried I, grasping his hand, "you are so far from displeasing me by your familiarity, that I must beg you'll accept my friendship, as you already have all my esteem."—"Then with gratitude I accept the offer," cried he, squeezing me by the hand, "thou glorious pillar of unshaken orthodoxy: and do I behold"—I here interrupted what he was going to say; for though, as an author, I could digest no small share of flattery, yet now my modesty would permit no more. However, no lovers in romance ever cemented a more instantaneous friendship. We talked upon several subjects: at first I thought he seemed rather devout than learned, and began to think he despised all human doctrines as dross. Yet this no

way

way lessened him in my esteem ; for I had, for some time, begun privately to harbour such an opinion myself. I therefore took occasion to observe, that the world, in general, began to be blameably indifferently as to doctrinal matters, and followed human speculations too much.—“ Ay, Sir,” replied he, as if he had reserved all his learning to that moment, “ Ay, Sir, the world is in its dotage, and yet the cosmogony or creation of the world has puzzled philosophers of all ages. What a medley of opinions have they not broached upon the creation of the world! Sanconiathon Manetho, Berosus, and Ocellus Lukanus, have all attempted it in vain. The latter has these words, *Anarchon ara kai atelutaion to pas*, which imply, that all things have neither beginning nor end. Manetho also, who lived about the time of Nebuchadon-Affer, Affer being a Syriac word, usually applied as a surname to the kings of that country, as Teglath Phael-Affer, Nabon-Affer, he, say, formed a conjecture equally absurd ; for, as we usually say, *ek to biblion kubernetes*, which implies that books will never teach the world ; so he attempted to investigate—But, Sir, I ask pardon, I am straying from the question.”—That he actually was ; nor could I, for my life, see how the creation of the world had any thing to do with the business I was talking of ; but it was sufficient to show me that he was a man of letters, and I now reverenced him the more. I was resolved, therefore, to bring him to the touch-stone ; but he was too mild, and

too gentle to contend for victory. Whenever I made any observation that looked like a challenge to controversy, he would smile, shake his head, and say nothing; by which I understood he could say much, if he thought proper. The subject, therefore, insensibly changed from the business of antiquity, to that which brought us both to the fair: mine, I told him, was to sell an horse; and, very luckily indeed, his was to buy one for one of his tenants. My horse was soon produced, and, in fine, we struck a bargain. Nothing now remained but to pay me, and he accordingly pulled out a thirty pound note, and bid me change it. Not being in a capacity of complying with his demand, he ordered the landlady to call up his footman, who made his appearance in a very genteel livery. "Here, Abraham," cried he, "go and get gold for this; you'll do it at neighbour Jackson's, or any where." While the fellow was gone, he entertained me with a pathetic harangue on the great scarcity of silver, which I undertook to improve, by deplored also the great scarcity of gold; and, by the time Abraham returned, we had both agreed, that money was never so hard to be come at as now. Abraham returned to inform us, that he had been over the whole fair, and could not get change, though he had offered half a crown for doing it. This was a very great disappointment to us all; but the old gentleman having paused a little, asked me if I knew one Solomon Flamborough in my part of the country? upon replying, that he was my next door neighbour, "If that be the

“ case, then,” returned he, “ I believe we shall deal
“ You shall have a draught upon him, payable at
“ sight ; and let me tell you, he is as warm a man as
“ any within five miles round him. Honest Solomon
“ and I have been acquainted for many years to-
“ gether. I remember I always beat him at three
“ jumps ; but he could hop upon one leg farther than
“ I.” A draught upon my neighbour was to me the
same as money ; for I was sufficiently convinced of
his ability : the draught was signed, and put into my
hands, and Mr Jenkinson the old gentleman, his man
Abraham, and my horse old Blackberry, trotted off,
very well pleased with each other.

Being now left to reflection, I began to recollect
that I had done wrong, in taking a draught from a
stranger, and so prudently resolved upon having back
my horse, and following the purchaser. But this was
now too late : I therefore made directly homewards,
resolving to get the draught changed into money at
my friend’s, as fast as possible. I found my honest
neighbour smoking his pipe at his own door, and in-
forming him that I had a small bill upon him, he
read it twice over. “ You can read the name, I sup-
“ pose,” cried I, “ Ephraim Jenkinson ? ” “ Yes,” re-
turned he, “ the name is written plain enough, and I
“ know the gentleman too, the greatest rascal under
“ the canopy of heaven. This is the very same rogue
“ who sold us the spectacles. Was he not a venerable
“ looking man, with grey hair, and no flaps to his
“ pocket-holes ? And did he not talk a long string of

“ learnin

“ learning, about Greek, and cosmogony, and the “ world ?” To this I replied with a groan.—“ Ay,” continued he, “ he has but that one piece of learning “ in the world, and he always talks it away, when- “ ever he finds a scholar in company : but I know the “ rogue, and will catch him yet.”

Though I was already sufficiently mortified, my greatest struggle was to come, in facing my wife and daughters. No truant was ever more afraid of returning to school, there to behold the master’s sweet visage, than I was of going home ; I was determined, however, to anticipate their fury, by first falling into a passion myself.

But, alas ! upon entering, I found the family no way disposed for battle. My wife and girls were all in tears, Mr Thornhill having been there that day to inform them, that their journey to town was entirely over : the two ladies, having heard reports of us from some malicious person about us, were that day set out for London. He could neither discover the tendency, nor the author of these ; but, whatever they might be, or whoever might have broached them, he continued to assure our family of his friendship and protection. I found, therefore, that they bore my disappointment with great resignation, as it was eclipsed in the greatness of their own. But what perplexed us most, was to think who could be so base as to asperse the character of a family so harmless as ours, too humble to excite envy, and too inoffensive to create disgust.

C H A P. XV.

All Mr Burchell's villainy at once detected. The folly of being over wise.

THAT evening, and a part of the following day, I was employed in fruitless attempts to discover our enemies; scarce a family in the neighbourhood but incurred our suspicions, and each of us had reasons for our opinion, best known to ourselves. As we were in this perplexity, one of our little boys, who had been playing abroad, brought in a letter-case, which he found on the green. It was quickly known to belong to Mr Burchell, with whom it had been seen, and, upon examination, contained some hints upon different subjects; but what particularly engaged our attention was a sealed note, superscribed, *The copy of a letter to be sent to the two ladies at Thornhill castle.* It instantly occurred that he was the base informer, and we deliberated whether the note should not be broke open. I was against it; but Sophia, who said she was sure that of all men he would be the last to be guilty of so much baseness, insisted upon its being read. In this she was seconded by the rest of the family, and, at their joint solicitations, I read as follows:

"LADIES,

WAKEFIELD

“LADIES,

“The bearer will sufficiently satisfy you as to the person from whom this comes: one, at least the friend of innocence, and ready to prevent its being seduced. I am informed, for a truth, that you have some intentions of bringing two young ladies to town, whom I have some knowledge of, under the character of companions. As I would neither have simplicity imposed upon, nor virtue contaminated, I must offer it as my opinion, that the impropriety of such a step will be attended with dangerous consequences. It has never been my way to treat the infamous or the lewd with severity; nor should I now have taken this method of explaining myself, or reproofing folly, did it not aim at guilt. Take therefore the admonition of a friend, and seriously reflect on the consequences of introducing infamy and vice into retreats where peace and innocence have hitherto resided.”

Our doubts were now at an end. There seemed indeed something applicable to both sides in this letter, and its censures might as well be referred to those to whom it was written, as to us; but the malicious meaning was obvious, and we went no farther. My wife had scarce patience to hear me to the end, but railed at the writer with unrestrained resentment. Olivia was equally severe; and Sophia seemed perfectly amazed at his baseness. As for my part, it appeared

THE VICAR OF

to me one of the vilest instances of unprovoked ingratitude I had met with. Nor could I account for it in any other manner, than by imputing it to his desire of detaining my youngest daughter in the country, to have the more frequent opportunities of an interview. In this manner we all sat ruminating upon schemes of vengeance, when our other little boy came running in to tell us that Mr Burchell was approaching at the other end of the field. It is easier to conceive than describe the complicated sensations which are felt from the pain of a recent injury, and the pleasure of approaching revenge. Though our intentions were only to upbraid him with his ingratitude, yet it was resolved to do it in a manner that would be perfectly cutting. For this purpose, we agreed to meet him with our usual smiles, to chat in the beginning with more than ordinary kindness, to amuse him a little; but then, in the midst of the flattering calm, to burst upon him like an earthquake, and overwhelm him with the sense of his own baseness. This being resolved upon, my wife undertook to manage the business herself, as she really had some talents for such an undertaking. We saw him approach; he entered, drew a chair, and sat down. — “A fine day, Mr Burchell.” — “A very fine day, Doctor; though I fancy we shall have some rain, by the shooting of my corns.” — “The shooting of your horns,” cried my wife, in a loud fit of laughter, and then asked pardon for being fond of a joke. — “Dear Madam,” replied he, “I pardon you with all my heart; for I protest

“ I should not have thought it a joke till you told me.”—“ Perhaps not, Sir,” cried my wife, winking at us, “ and yet I dare say you can tell us how many “ jokes go to an ounce.”—“ I fancy, Madam,” returned Burchell, “ you have been reading a jest- “ book this morning, that ounce of jokes is so very “ good a conceit ; and yet, Madam, I had rather see “ half an ounce of understanding.”—“ I believe you “ might,” cried my wife, still smiling at us, though the laugh was against her ; “ and yet I have seen “ some men pretend to understanding that have very “ little.”—“ And, no doubt,” replied her antagonist, “ you have known ladies set up for wit that had none.”—I quickly began to find that my wife was likely to gain but little at this business ; so I resolved to treat him in a style of more severity myself. “ Both wit “ and understanding,” cried I, “ are trifles, without “ integrity : it is that which gives value to every cha- “ racter. The ignorant peasant, without fault, is “ greater than the philosopher with many ; for what “ is genius or courage without an heart ! *An honest* “ *man is the noblest work of God.*”

“ I always held that favourite maxim of Pope,” returned Mr. Burchell, “ as very unworthy a man of “ genius, and a base desertion of his own superiority. “ As the reputation of books is raised, not by their “ freedom from defect, but the greatness of their “ beauties ; so should that of men be prized, not for “ their exemption from fault, but the size of those “ virtues they are possessed of. The scholar may “ want

" want prudence, the statesman may have pride, and
" the champion ferocity; but shall we prefer to these
" men the low mechanic, who laboriously plods on
" through life, without censure or applause? We
" might as well prefer the tame correct paintings of
" the Flemish school, to the erroneous, but sublime
" animations of the Roman pencil."

" Sir," replied I, " your present observation is just,
" when there are shining virtues and minute defects;
" but when it appears, that great vices are opposed in
" the same mind to as extraordinary virtues, such a
" character deserves contempt."

" Perhaps" cried he, " there may be some such
" monsters as you describe, of great vices joined to
" great virtues; yet, in my progress through life, I
" never yet found one instance of their existence: on
" the contrary, I have ever perceived, that, where
" the mind was capacious, the affections were good.
" And, indeed, Providence seems kindly our friend in
" this particular, thus to debilitate the understanding
" where the heart is corrupt, and diminish the power
" where there is the will to do mischief. This rule
" seems to extend even to other animals: the little
" vermin race are ever treacherous, cruel, and cow-
" ardly; whilst those endowed with strength and
" power, are generous, brave, and gentle."

" These observations found well," returned I;
" and yet it would be easy this moment to point out
" a man," and I fixed my eye modestly upon him,
" whose head and heart form a most detestable con-
" tract."

"trast." "Ay, Sir," continued I, raising my voice, "and I am glad to have this opportunity of detecting him in the midst of his fancied security. Do you know this, Sir, this pocket-book?"—"Yes, Sir," returned he, with a face of impenetrable assurance, "that pocket-book is mine; and I am glad you have found it."—"And do you know," cried I, "this letter?" Nay, never faulter, man; but look me full in the face: I say, "do you know this letter?"—"That letter," returned he; "yes; it was I that wrote that letter."—"And how could you," said I, "so basely, so ungratefully, presume to write this letter?"—"And how came you," replied he, with looks of unparalleled effrontery, "so basely to presume to break open this letter? Don't you know, now, I could hang you all for this? All that I have to do, is to swear at the next justice's, that you have been guilty of breaking open the lock of my pocket-book, and so hang you all up at his door." This piece of unexpected insolence raised me to such a pitch, that I could scarce govern my passion. "Ungrateful wretch, be gone, and no longer pollute my dwelling with thy baseness. Be gone, and never let me see thee again; go from my doors; and the only punishment I wish thee, is an alarmed conscience, which will be a sufficient tormentor!" So saying, I threw him his pocket-book, which he took up with a smile, and, shutting the clasps with the utmost composure, left us quite astonished at the serenity of his assurance. My wife was particularly enraged,

THE VICAR OF

raged, that nothing could make him angry, or make him seem ashamed of his villanies. " My dear," cried I, willing to calm those passions that had been raised too high among us, " we are not to be surprised " that bad men want shame ; they only blush at be- " ing detected in doing good, but glory in their " vices."

" Guilt and Shame, says the allegory, were at first " companions, and, in the beginning of their journey, " inseparably kept together. But their union was " soon found to be disagreeable, and inconvenient to " both : Guilt gave Shame frequent uneasiness ; and " Shame often betrayed the secret conspiracies of " Guilt. After long disagreement, therefore, they at " length consented to part for ever. Guilt boldly " walked forward alone, to overtake Fate, that went " before, in the shape of an executioner ; but Shame, " being naturally timorous, returned back to keep " company with Virtue, which, in the beginning of " their journey, they had left behind. Thus, my " children, after men have travelled through a few " stages in vice, they no longer continue to have shame " at doing evil, and shame attends only upon their " virtues."

C H A P. XVI.

The family use art, which is opposed with still greater.

W^HATEVER might have been Sophia's sensations, the rest of the family was easily consoled for Mr Burchell's absence, by the company of our landlord, whose visits now became more frequent, and longer. Though he had been disappointed in procuring my daughters the amusements of the town, as he designed, he took every opportunity of supplying them with those little recreations which our retirement would admit of. He usually came in the morning; and while my son and I followed our occupations abroad, he sat with the family at home, and amused them, by describing the town, with every part of which he was particularly acquainted. He could repeat all the observations that were retailed in the atmosphere of the play-houses; and had all the good things of the high wits by rote, long before they made way into the jest-books. The intervals between conversation were employed in teaching my daughters picquet, or sometimes in setting my two little ones to box, to make them *sharp*, as he called it; but the hopes of having him for a son-in-law, in some measure, blinded us to all his defects. It must be owned,

owned, that my wife laid a thousand schemes to entrap him ; or, to speak it more tenderly, used every art to magnify the merit of her daughter. If the cakes at tea eat short and crisp, they were made by Olivia ; if the gooseberry wine was well knit, the gooseberries were of her gathering ; it was her fingers gave the pickles their peculiar green ; and, in the composition of a pudding, her judgment was infallible. Then the poor woman would sometimes tell the Squire, that she thought him and Olivia extremely like each other, and would bid both stand up, to see which was tallest. These instances of cunning, which she thought impenetrable, yet, which every body saw through, were very pleasing to our benefactor, who gave every day some new proofs of his passion, which, though they had not arisen to proposals of marriage ; yet, we thought, fell but little short of it ; and his slowness was attributed sometimes to native bashfulness, and sometimes to his fear of offending a rich uncle. An occurrence, however, which happened soon after, put it beyond a doubt, that he designed to become one of the family ; my wife even regarded it as an absolute promise.

My wife and daughters happening to return a visit to neighbour Flamborough's, found that family had lately got their pictures drawn by a limner, who travelled the country, and did them for fifteen shilling a-head. As this family and ours had long a sort of rivalry in point of taste, our spirit took the alarm at this stolen march upon us ; and, notwithstanding

standing all I could say, (and I said much,) it was resolved that we should have our pictures done too. Having, therefore, engaged the limner; for what could I do? our next deliberation was, to show the superiority of our taste in the attitudes. As for our neighbour's family, there were seven of them, and they were drawn with seven oranges; a thing quite out of taste, no variety in life, no composition in the world. We desired to have something done in a brighter style; and, after many debates, at length came to an unanimous resolution to be drawn together in one large historical family-piece. This would be cheaper, since one frame would serve for all; and it would be infinitely more genteel; for all families of any taste were now drawn in the same manner. As we did not immediately recollect an historical subject to hit us, we were contented each with being drawn as independent historical figures. My wife desired to be represented as Venus, with a ~~komacher~~ richly set with diamonds, and her two little ones as Cupids by her side, while I, in my gown and band, was to present her with my books on the Bangorean controversy. Olivia would be drawn as an Amazon, sitting upon a bank of flowers, dressed in a green Joseph, laced with gold, and a whip in her hand. Sophia was to be a shepherdess, with as many sheep as the painter could spare; and Moses was to be dressed out with an hat and white feather. Our taste so much pleased the Squire, that he insisted on being put in as one of the family, in the character of Alexander the

Great, at Olivia's feet. This was considered by us all as an indication of his desire to be introduced into the family in reality ; nor could we refuse his request. The painter was therefore set to work ; and, as he wrought with assiduity and expedition, in less than four days the whole was completed. The piece was large ; and, it must be owned, he did not spare his colours ; for which my wife gave him great encomiums. We were all perfectly satisfied with his performance ; but an unfortunate circumstance had not occurred till the picture was finished, which now struck us with dismay. It was so very large, that we had no place in the house to fix it. How we all came to disregard so material a point, is inconceivable ; but certain it is, we were at this time all greatly overseen. Instead, therefore, of gratifying our vanity, as we hoped, there it leaned, in a most mortifying manner, against the kitchen-wall, where the canvas was stretched and painted, much too large to be got thro' any of the doors, and the jest of all our neighbours. One compared it to Robinson Crusoe's long-boat, too large to be removed ; another thought it more resembled a reel in a bottle ; some wondered how it should be got out, and still more were amazed how it ever got in.

But though it excited the ridicule of some, it effectually raised more ill-natured suggestions in many. The Squire's portrait being found united with ours, was an honour too great to escape envy. Malicious whispers began to circulate at our expence, and our tranquillity

tranquillity continually to be disturbed by persons who came as friends, to tell us what was said of us by enemies. These reports we always resented with becoming spirit ; but scandal ever improves by opposition. We again, therefore, entered into a consultation upon obviating the malice of our enemies, and at last came to a resolution, which had too much cunning to give me entire satisfaction. It was this : as our principal object was to discover the honour of Mr Thornhill's addressees, my wife undertook to sound him, by pretending to ask his advice in the choice of an husband for her eldest daughter. If this was not found sufficient to induce him to a declaration, it was then fixed upon to terrify him with a rival, which, it was thought, would compel him, though ever so refractory. To this last step, however, I would by no means give my consent, till Olivia gave me the most solemn assurances, that she would marry the person provided to rival him upon this occasion, if Mr Thornhill did not prevent it, by taking her himself. Such was the scheme laid, which, though I did not strenuously oppose, I did not entirely approve.

The next time, therefore, that Mr Thornhill came to see us, my girls took care to be out of the way, in order to give their mamma an opportunity of putting her scheme in execution ; but they only retired to the next room, from whence they could overhear the whole conversation ; which my wife artfully introduced, by observing, that one of the Miss Flamboroughs was like to have a very good match of it in

Mr Spanker. To this the Squire assenting, she proceeded to remark, that they who had warm fortunes were always sure of getting good husbands: "But "Heaven help," continued she, "the girls that have "none. What signifies beauty, Mr Thornhill? or "what signifies all the virtue, and all the qualifications in the world, in this age of self-interest? It "is not, what is she? but, what has she? is all the "cry."

"Madam," returned he, "I highly approve the "justice, as well as the novelty of your remarks; and "if I were a king it should be otherwise. It would "then, indeed, be fine times with the girls without "fortunes: our two young ladies should be the first "for whom I would provide."

"Ah, Sir!" returned my wife, "you are pleased "to be facetious: but I wish I were a queen, and "then I know where they should look for an husband. "But now that you have put it into my head, seri- "ously, Mr Thornhill, can't you recommend me a "proper husband for my eldest girl? She is now "nineteen years old, well grown, and well educated, "and, in my humble opinion, does not want for "parts."

"Madam," replied he, "if I were to choose, I "would find out a person possessed of every accom- "plishment that can make an angel happy. One "with prudence, fortune, taste, and sincerity; such "Madam, would be, in my opinion, the proper hus- "band."—"Ay, Sir," said she, "but do you know

" of any such person ?" — " No, Madam," returned he, " it is impossible to know any person that deserves " to be her husband ; she's too great a treasure for " one man's possession. She's a goddess. Upon my " soul, I speak what I think, she's an angel." — " Ah ! " Mr Thornhill, you only flatter my poor girl : but we " have been thinking of marrying her to one of your " tenants, whose mother is lately dead, and who wants " a manager : you know who I mean, farmer Wil- " liams ; a warm man, Mr Thornhill, able to give " her good bread ; ay, and who has several times " made her proposals, (which was actually the case :) " but Sir," concluded she, " I should be glad to have " your approbation of our choice." — " How, Ma- " dam," replied he, " my approbation ! my appro- " bation of such a choice ! Never. What ! Sacrifice so " much beauty, and sense, and goodness, to a creature " insensible of the blessing ! Excuse me, I can never " approve of such a piece of injustice ! And I have " my reasons !" — " Indeed, Sir," cried Deborah, " if you have your reasons, that's another affair ; but " I should be glad to know those reasons." — " Ex- " cuse me, Madam," returned he, " they ly too deep " for discovery, (laying his hand upon his bosom :) " they remain buried, rivetted here."

After he was gone, upon general consultation, we could not tell what to make of these fine sentiments. Olivia considered them as instances of the most exalted passion, but I was not quite so sanguine : it seemed to me pretty plain, that they had more of love than

matrimony in them: yet, whatever they might portend, was resolved to prosecute the scheme of farmer Williams, who, since my daughter's first appearance in the country, had paid her his addresses.

C H A P. XVII.

Scarce any virtue found to resist the power of long and pleasing temptation.

AS I only studied my child's real happiness, the affiuity of Mr Williams pleased me, as he was in easy circumstances, prudent, and sincere. It required but very little encouragement to revive his former passion; so that in an evening or two after, he and Mr Thornhill met at our house, and surveyed each other for some time with looks of anger: but Williams owed his landlord no rent, and little regarded his indignation. Olivia, on her side, acted the coquet to perfection, if that might be called acting, which was her real character, pretending to lavish all her tenderness on her new lover. Mr Thornhill appeared quite dejected at this preference, and with a pensive air took leave; though I own it puzzled me to find him so much in pain as he appeared to be, when he had it in his power so easily to remoye the cause, by

declaring

declaring an honourable passion. But whatever uneasiness he seemed to endure, it could easily be perceived that Olivia's anguish was still greater. After any of those interviews between her lovers, of which there were several, she usually retired to solitude, and there indulged her grief. It was in such a situation I found her one evening, after she had been for some time supporting a fictitious gaiety. "You now see, "my child," said I, "that your confidence in Mr Thornhill's passion was all a dream: he permits the rivalry of another, every way his inferior, though he knows it lies in his power to secure you, by a candid declaration himself." — "Yes, pappa," returned she, "but he has his reasons for this delay: I know he has. The sincerity of his looks and words convinces me of his real esteem. A short time, I hope, will discover the generosity of his sentiments, and convince you that my opinion of him has been more just than yours." — "Olivia, my darling," returned I, "every scheme that has been hitherto pursued, to compel him to a declaration, has been proposed and planned by yourself; nor can you in the least say that I have constrained you. But you must not suppose, my dear, that I will be ever instrumental in suffering his honest rival to be the dupe of your ill-placed passion. Whatever time you require to bring your fancied admirer to an explanation, shall be granted; but, at the expiration of that term, if he is still regardless, I must absolutely insist, that honest Mr Williams shall be

" rewarded for his fidelity. The character which
" I have hitherto supported in life demands this from
" me; and my tenderness as a parent shall never in-
" fluence my integrity as a man. Name then your
" day; let it be as distant as you think proper; and,
" in the mean time, take care to let Mr Thornhill
" know the exact time on which I design delivering
" you up to another. If he really loves you, his own
" good sense will readily suggest that there is but one
" method alone to prevent his losing you for ever."

—This proposal, which she could not avoid considering as perfectly just, was readily agreed to. She again renewed her most positive promise of marrying Mr Williams, in case of the other's insensibility; and, at the next opportunity, in Mr Thornhill's presence, that day month was fixed upon for her nuptials with his rival.

Such vigorous proceedings seemed to redouble Mr Thornhill's anxiety: but what Olivia really felt gave me some uneasiness. In this struggle between prudence and passion, her vivacity quite forsook her, and every opportunity of solitude was sought and spent in tears. One week passed away, but her lover made no efforts to restrain her nuptials. The succeeding week he was still assiduous, but not more open. On the third he discontinued his visits entirely; and, instead of my daughter testifying any impatience, as I expected, she seemed to retain a pensive tranquillity, which I looked upon as a resignation. For my own part, I was now sincerely pleased with thinking, that

my child was going to be secured in a continuance of competence and peace, and frequently applauded her resolution. It was within about four days of her intended nuptials, that my little family, at night, were gathered round a charming fire, telling stories of the past, and laying schemes for the future; busied in forming a thousand projects, and laughing at whatever folly came uppermost. "Well, Moses," cried I, "we shall soon, my boy, have a wedding in the family: What is your opinion of matters and things in general?" — "My opinion, father, is, that all things go on very well; and I was just now thinking, that, when sister Livy is married to farmer Williams, we shall then have the loan of his cyder-pres and brewing tubs for nothing." — "That we shall, Moses," cried I, "and he will sing us Death and the Lady, to raise our spirits, into the bargain." — "He has taught that song to our Dick," cried Moses; "and I think he goes thro' it very prettily." "Does he so?" cried I, "then let us have it: where is little Dick? let him up with it boldly." — "My brother Dick," cried Bill, my youngest, "is just gone out with sister Livy; but Mr Williams has taught me two songs, and I'll sing them for you, Pappa. Which song do you choose, *the Dying Swan*, or the *Elegy on the death of a mad dog*?" — "The Elegy, child, by all means," said I; "I never heard that yet: and Deborah, my life, grief you know is dry; let us have a bottle of the best gooseberry wine to keep up our spirits. I have

" wept

" wept so much at all sorts of elegies of late, that
 without an enlivening glass, I am sure this will
 overcome me; and Sophy, love, take your guitar
 and thrum in with the boy a little."

An ELEGY on the Death of a MAD Dog.

GOOD people all, of every sort,
 Give ear unto my song ;
 And if you find it wondrous short,
 It cannot hold you long.

In Islington there was a man,
 Of whom the world might say,
 That still a godly race he ran,
 Whene'er he went to pray.

A kind and gentle heart he had,
 To comfort friends and foes ;
 The naked ev'ry day he clad,
 When he put on his clothes.

And in that town a dog was found,
 As many dogs there be,
 Both mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound,
 And curs of low degree.

WAKEFIELD.

115

This dog and man at first were friends ;

But, when a pique began,

The dog, to gain his private ends,

Went mad, and bit the man.

Around from all the neighb'ring streets,

The wond'ring neighbours ran,

And swore the dog had lost his wits,

To bite so good a man.

The wound it seem'd both sore and sad,

To every Christian eye ;

And while they swore the dog was mad,

They swore the man would die.

But soon a wonder came to light,

That show'd the rogues they ly'd ;

The man recover'd of the bite,

The dog it was that dy'd.

“ A very good boy, Bill, upon my word, and an
“ elegy that may truly be called tragical. Come, my
“ children, here's Bill's health, and may he one day
“ be a bishop.”

“ With all my heart,” cried my wife ; “ and if he
“ but preaches as well as he sings, I make no doubt
“ of him. The most of his family, by the mother's
“ side, could sing a good song : it was a common say-
“ ing in our country, that the family of the Blenkin-
“ sops could never look straight before them, nor the
“ Hugginses

“ Hugginises blow out a candle : that there were none
“ of the Grograms but could sing a song, or of the
“ Marjoram but could tell a story.” — “ However
“ that be,” cried I, “ the most vulgar ballad of them
“ all generally pleases me better than the fine modern
“ ones, and things that petrify us in a single stanza;
“ productions that we at once detest and praise. Put
“ the glass to your brother, Moses. The great fault
“ of these elegists is, that they are in despair for grief
“ that give the sensible part of mankind very little
“ pain. A lady loses her lap-dog, and so the silly poet
“ runs home to versify the disaster.”

“ That may be the mode,” cried Moses, “ in sub-
“ limer compositions ; but the Ranelagh songs that
“ come down to us, are perfectly familiar, and all cast
“ in the same mould. Colin meets Dolly, and they
“ hold a dialogue together ; he gives her a fairing to
“ put in her hair, and she presents him with a nose-
“ gay, and then they go together to church, where
“ they give good advice to young nymphs and swains,
“ to get married as fast as they can.”

“ And very good advice, too,” cried I : “ and I
“ am told there is not a place in the world where ad-
“ vice can be given with so much propriety as there;
“ for, while it persuades us to marry, it also furnishes
“ us with a wife ; and, surely, that must be an excel-
“ lent market, my boy, where we are told what we
“ want, and supplied with it when wanting.”

“ Yes, Sir,” returned Moses, “ and I know but of
“ two such markets for wives in Europe, Ranelagh

“in England, and Fontarabia in Spain. The Spanish
“market is kept open once a-year, but our English
“wives are saleable every night.”

“ You are right, my boy,” cried his mother; Old
“England is the only place in the world for husbands
“to get wives.”—“ And for wives to manage their
“husbands,” interrupted I. “ It is a proverb abroad,
“that if a bridge were built across the sea, all the la-
“dies of the Continent would come over to take pat-
“tern from ours; for there are no such wives in Eu-
“rope as our own.”

“ But let us have one bottle more, Deborah, my
“life; and Moses, give us a good song. What thanks
“do we not owe to Heaven, for thus bestowing tran-
“quillity, health, and competence? I think myself
“happier now than the greatest monarch upon earth.
“ He has no such fire-side, nor such pleasant faces
“about it. Yes, Deborah, my dear, we are now
“growing old; but the evening of our life is likely to
“be happy. We are descended from ancestors that
“knew no stain, and we shall leave a good and vir-
“tuous race of children behind us. While we live,
“they will be our support and our pleasure here, and,
“when we die, they will transmit our honour untaint-
“ed to posterity. Come, my son, we wait for your
“song: let us have a chorus. But where is my dar-
“ling Olivia? That little cherub’s voice is always
“sweetest in the concert.”—Just as I spoke, Dick
“came running in: “ O Pappa, Pappa, she is gone
“from us, she is gone from us, my sister Livy is gone

“from us for ever.”—“Gone, child!”—“Yes, she is gone off with two gentlemen in a post-chaise; and one of them kissed her, and said he would die for her; and she cried very much, and was for coming back; but he persuaded her again, and she went into the chaise; and said, O what will my poor Pappa do, when he knows I am undone!”—

“Now, then,” cried I, “my children, go and be miserable; for we shall never enjoy one hour more. And O may Heaven’s everlasting fury light upon him and his!—thus to rob me of my child! And sure it will, for taking back my sweet innocent that I was leading up to Heaven. Such sincerity as my child was possessed of! But all our earthly happiness is now over. Go, my children, go and be miserable and infamous; for my heart is broken within me!”

—“Father,” cried my son, “is this your fortitude?” “Fortitude, child! Yes, he shall see I have fortitude! Bring me my pistols. I’ll pursue the traitor. While he is on earth I’ll pursue him. Old as I am, he shall find I can sting him yet. The villain! The perfidious villain!”—I had by this time reached down my pistols, when my poor wife, whose passions were not so strong as mine, caught me in her arms. “My dearest, dearest husband,” cried she, “the Bible is the only weapon that is fit for your old hands now. Open that, my love, and read our anguish into patience; for she is vilely deceived.”

—Her sorrow repressed the rest in silence.—“Indeed, Sir,” resumed my son, after a pause, “your

“rage

rage is too violent and unbecoming. You should
" be my mother's comforter, and you increase her
" pain. It ill suited you and your reverend charac-
" ter, thus to curse your greatest enemy: you should
" not have cursed the wretch, villain as he is."—
" I did not curse him, child, did I?"—“Indeed,
" Sir, you did, you cursed him twice.”—“Then
" may Heaven forgive me and him, if I did. And
" now, my son, I see it was more than human bene-
" volence that first taught us to bless our enemies!
" Blessed be his holy name for all the good he has
" given, and for that he has taken away. But it is
" not, it is not a small distress that can wring tears
" from these old eyes, that have not wept for so many
" years. My child!—To undo my darling! May
" confusion seize—Heaven forgive me, what am I
" about to say! You may remember, my love, how
" good she was, and how charming; till this vile mo-
" ment, all her care was to make us happy. Had
" she but died! But she is gone, the honour of our
" family contaminated; and I must look out for hap-
" piness in other worlds than here. But, my child,
" you saw them go off: perhaps he forced her away?
" If he forced her, she may yet be innocent.”—“Ah,
" no, Sir,” cried the child; “he only kissed her, and
" called her his angel, and she wept very much, and
" leaned upon his arm, and they drove off very fast.”
—“She's an ungrateful creature,” cried my wife,
who could scarce speak for weeping, “to use us thus.
“She never had the least constraint put upon her af-

“ fections; The vile strumpet has basely deserted her parents without any provocation, thus to bring your grey hairs to the grave, and I must shortly follow.”

In this manner that night, the first of our real misfortunes, was spent in the bitterness of complaint, and ill-supported sallies of enthusiasm, I determined, however, to find out our betrayer, wherever he was, and reproach his baseness. The next morning, we missed our wretched child at breakfast, where she used to give life and cheerfulness to us all. My wife, as before, attempted to ease her heart by reproaches. “ Never,” cried she, “ shall that vilest stain of our family again darken those harmless doors. I will never call her daughter more. No; let the strumpet live with her vile seducer: she may bring us to shame; but she shall never more deceive us.”

“ Wife,” said I, “ do not talk thus hardly: my desire of her guilt is as great as yours; but ever shall this house, and this heart, be open to a poor returning repentant sinner. The sooner she returns from her transgression, the more welcome shall she be to me. For the first time, the very best may err; and may persuade, and novelty spread out its charm. The first fault is the child of simplicity; but every other, the offspring of guilt. Yes, the wretched creature shall be welcome to this heart, and this house, though stained with ten thousand vices. I will again hearken to the music of her voice, again will I hang fondly on her bosom, if I find but re-

“ penance

"penance there. My son, bring hither my Bible and
"my staff; I will pursue her, wherever she is; and
"though I cannot save her from shame, I may pre-
"vent the continuance of iniquity."

C H A P. XVIII.

The pursuit of a father to reclaim a lost child to virtue.

THOUGH the child could not describe the gentleman's person who handed his sister into the post-chaise, yet my suspicions fell entirely upon our young landlord, whose character for such intrigues was but too well known. I therefore directed my steps towards Thornhill castle, resolving to upbraid him, and, if possible, to bring back my daughter: but, before I had reached his seat, I was met by one of my parishioners, who said, he saw a young Lady, resembling my daughter, in a post-chaise with a gentleman, who, by the description, I could only guess to be Mr Burchell, and that they drove very fast. This information, however, did by no means satisfy me. I therefore went to the young Squire's, and, though it was yet early, insisted upon seeing him immediately: he soon appeared, with the most open familiar air, and

seemed perfectly amazed at my daughter's clopement; protesting, upon his honour, that he was quite a stranger to it. I now, therefore, condemned my former suspicions, and could turn them only on Mr Burchell, who, I recollect, had, of late, several private conferences with her: but the appearance of another witness left me no room to doubt of his villainy, who averred, that he and my daughter were actually gone towards the wells, about thirty miles off, where there was a great deal of company. Hearing this, I resolved to pursue them there. I walked along with earnestness, and enquired of several by the way; but received no accounts, till, entering the town, I was met by a person on horseback, whom I remembered to have seen at the Squire's, and he assured me, that if I followed them to the races, which were but thirty miles farther, I might depend upon overtaking them; for he had seen them dance there the night before; and the whole assembly seemed charmed with my daughter's performance. Early the next day, I walked forward to the races, and about four in the afternoon I came upon the course.

The company made a very brilliant appearance, all earnestly employed in one pursuit, that of pleasure; how different from mine, that of reclaiming a lost child to virtue! I thought I perceived Mr Burchell at some distance from me: but, as if he dreaded an interview, upon my approaching him, he mixed among a crowd, and I saw him no more. I now reflected, that it would be to no purpose to continue my pursuit further.

and resolved to return home to an innocent family, who wanted my assistance. But the agitations of my mind, and the fatigues I had undergone, threw me into a fever, the symptoms of which I perceived before I came off the course. This was another unexpected stroke, as I was more than seventy miles distant from home: however, I retired to a little ale-house by the road side; and in this place, the usual retreat of indigence and frugality, I laid me down, patiently to wait the issue of my disorder. I languished here for near three weeks; but at last my constitution prevailed, though I was unprovided with money to defray the expences of my entertainment. It is possible the anxiety from this last circumstance alone might have brought on a relapse, had I not been supported by a traveller, who stopped to take a cursory refreshment. This person was no other than the philanthropic book-seller in St Paul's church-yard, who has written so many little books for children: he called himself their friend; but he was the friend of all mankind. He was no sooner alighted, but he was in haste to be gone; for he was ever on busnes of the utmost importance; and was, at that time, actually compiling materials for the history of one Mr Thomas Trip. I immediately recollect this good-natured man's red pimpled face; for he had published for me against the Deutrogamists of the age, and from him I borrowed a few pieces, to be paid at my return. Leaving the inn, therefore, as I was yet but weak, I resolved to return home by easy journeys of ten miles a-day. My health

and

and usual tranquillity were almost restored ; and I now condemned that pride which had made me refractory to the hand of correction. Man little knows what calamities are beyond his patience to bear, till he tries them ; as, in ascending the heights of ambition, which look bright from below, every step we rise shows us some new prospect of hidden disappointment ; so, in our descent to the vale of wretchedness, which from the summits of pleasure appears dark and gloomy, the busy mind, still attentive to its own amusement, finds something to flatter and surprise it. Still as we descend, the objects appear to brighten ; unexpected prospects amuse, and the mental eye becomes adapted to its gloomy situation.

I now proceeded forwards, and had walked about two hours, when I perceived what appeared at a distance like the waggon, which I was resolved to overtake ; but, when I came up with it, found it to be a strolling company's cart, that was carrying their scenes, and other theatrical furniture, to the next village, where they were to exhibit. The cart was attended only by the person who drove it, and one of the company, as the rest of the players were to follow the ensuing day. Good company upon the road, says the proverb, is always the shortest cut. I therefore entered into conversation with the poor player ; and, as I once had some theatrical powers myself, I dissent ed on such topics with my usual freedom : but as I was pretty much unacquainted with the present state of the stage, I demanded who were the present the-

trical writers in vogue? who the Drydens and Otways of the day?—"I fancy, Sir," cried the player, "few of our modern dramatists would think themselves much honoured by being compared to the writers you mention. Dryden and Rowe's manner, Sir, are quite out of fashion; our taste has gone back a whole century. Fletcher, Ben Johnson, and all the plays of Shakespeare, are the only things that go down."—"How," cried I, "is it possible the present age can be pleased with that antiquated dialect; that absolute humour, those overcharged characters, which abound in the works you mention?"—"Sir," returned my companion, "the public think nothing about dialect, or humour, or character; for that is none of their business: they only go to be amused, and find themselves happy when they can enjoy a pantomime, under the sanction of Johnson's or Shakespeare's name."—"So then I suppose," cried I, "that our modern dramatists are rather imitators of Shakespeare than of nature."—"To say the truth," returned my companion, "I don't know that they imitate any thing at all, nor indeed does the public require it of them: it is not the composition of the piece, but the number of starts and attitudes that may be introduced into it, that elicits applause. I have known a piece, with not one jest in the whole, shrugged into popularity; and another saved by the poet's throwing in a fit of the gripes. No, Sir; the works of Congreve and Farquhar have too much wit in them for

"for the present taste; our modern dialogue is much
"more natural."

By this time the equipage of the strolling company was arrived at the village; which, it seems, had been apprized of our approach, and was come out to gaze at us; for my companion observed that strollers always have more spectators without doors than within. I did not consider the impropriety of my being in such company, till I saw a mob gathered about me. I therefore took shelter, as fast as possible, in the first ale-house that offered; and, being shown into the common room, was accosted by a very well dressed gentleman who demanded whether I was the real chaplain of the company, or whether it was only to be my masquerade character in the play? Upon informing him of the truth, and that I did not belong to the company, he was condescending enough to desire me and the player to partake in a bowl of punch, over which he discussed modern politics with great earnestness and seeming interest. I set him down in my own mind for nothing less than a parliament-man at least; and was almost confirmed in my conjecture, when, upon my asking what there was in the house for supper, he insisted that the player and I should sup with him at his house; with which request, after some intreaties, I was prevailed on to comply.

C H A P. XIX.

The description of a person discontented with the present government, and apprehensive of the loss of our liberties.

THE house where we were to be entertained, lying at a small distance from the village, our inviter observed, that as the coach was not ready, he would conduct us on foot; and we soon arrived at one of the most magnificent mansions I had seen in the country. The apartment into which we were shown was perfectly elegant and modern; he went to give orders for supper, while the player, with a wink, observed that we were perfectly in luck. Our entertainer soon returned: an elegant supper was soon brought in; two or three ladies, in an easy dishabille, were introduced; and the conversation began with some brightness. Politics, however, was the subject on which our entertainer chiefly expatiated; for he asserted that liberty was at once his boast and his terror. After the cloth was removed, he asked me if I had seen the last Monitor? to which replying in the negative. "What, nor the Auditor, I suppose?" cried he. "Neither, Sir," returned I. "That's strange, very strange," replied my entertainer. Now, I read all the politics that come out. The Daily, the "Public,

“ Public, the Leger, the Chronicle, the London Evening, the Whitehall Evening, the seventeen magazines, and the two reviews; and, though they hate each other, I love them all. Liberty, Sir, liberty is the Briton’s boast; and, by all my coal-mines in Cornwall, I reverence its guardians.”

“ Then, it is to be hoped,” cried I, “ you reverence the king.”—“ Yes,” returned my entertainer, “ when he does what we would have him; but if he goes on as he has done of late, I’ll never trouble myself more with his matters. I say nothing; I think only I could have directed some things better. I don’t think there has been a sufficient number of advisers: he should advise with every person willing to give him advice, and then we should have things done in another manner.”

“ I wish,” cried I, “ that such intruding advisers were fixed in the pillory. It should be the duty of honest men to assist the weaker side of our constitution, that sacred power that has for some years been every day declining, and losing its due share of influence in the state. But these ignorants still continue the cry of liberty, and if they have any weight, basely throw it into the subsiding scale.”

“ How,” cried one of the ladies, “ do I live to see one so base, so sordid, as to be an enemy to liberty, and a defender of tyrants? Liberty, that sacred gift of Heaven, that glorious privilege of Britons!”

“Can it be possible,” cried our entertainer, “that there should be any found at present advocates for slavery? Any who are for meanly giving up the privileges of Britons? Can any, Sir, be so abject.”

“No, Sir,” replied I, “I am for liberty, that attitude of gods! Glorious liberty! that theme of modern declamation. I would have all men kings, I would be a king myself. We have all naturally an equal right to the throne: we are all originally equal. This is my opinion, and was once the opinion of a set of honest men who were called Levellers. They tried to erect themselves into a community, where all should be equally free. But, alas! it would never answer; for there were some among them stronger, and some more cunning than others, and these became masters of the rest; for, as sure as your groom rides your horses, because he is a cunninger animal than they, so surely will the animal that is cunninger or stronger than he, sit upon his shoulders in turn. Since, then, it is entailed upon humanity to submit; and some are born to command, and others to obey; the question is, as there must be tyrants, whether it is better to have them in the same house with us, or in the same village, or still farther off, in the metropolis? Now, Sir, for my own part, as I naturally hate the face of a tyrant, the farther off he is removed from me, the better pleased am I. The generality of man-

“ kind also are of my way of thinking ; and have in-
“ nimously created one king, whose election at once
“ diminishes the number of tyrants, and puts tyrants
“ at the greatest distance from the greatest number
“ of people. Now, those who were tyrants themselves
“ before the election of one tyrant, are naturally
“verse to a power raised over them, and whose weight
“ must ever lean heaviest on the subordinate orders.
“ It is the interest of the great, therefore, to dimin-
“ kingly power as much as possible ; because, what-
“ ever they take from it, is naturally restored to them-
“ selves ; and all they have to do in a state, is to re-
“ determine the single tyrant, by which they resume
“ their primeval authority. Now, a state may be
“ constitutionally circumstanced, its laws may be
“ disposed, and its men of opulence so minded, as al-
“ to conspire to carry on this business of undermining
“ monarchy. If the circumstances of the state be
“ such, for instance, as to favour the accumulation of
“ wealth, and make the opulent still more rich, this
“ will increase their strength and their ambition. But
“ an accumulation of wealth must necessarily be
“ the consequence in a state, when more riches flow
“ in from external commerce, than arise from internal
“ industry ; for, external commerce can only be ma-
“ naged to advantage by the rich : and they have
“ so, at the same time, all the emoluments arising
“ from internal industry : so that the rich, in such a
“ state, have two sources of wealth ; whereas the

poor have but one. Thus wealth, in all commercial states, is found to accumulate ; and such have hitherto, in time, become aristocratical. Besides this, the very laws of a country may contribute to the accumulation of wealth ; as, when those natural ties that bind the rich and poor together, are broken, and it is ordained, that the rich shall only marry among each other ; or, when the learned are held unqualified to serve their country as counsellors, merely from a defect of opulence ; and wealth is thus made the object of a wise man's ambition : by these means, I say, and such means as these riches will accumulate. The possessor of accumulated wealth, when furnished with the necessaries and pleasures of life, can employ the superfluities of fortune only in purchasing power : That is, differently speaking, in making dependents, in purchasing the liberty of the needy or the venal, of men who are willing to bear the mortification of contiguous tyranny for bread. Thus, each very opulent man generally gathers round him a circle of the poorest of people ; and the polity abounding in accumulated wealth may be compared to a Cartesian system, each orb with a vortex of its own. Those, however, who are willing to move in a great man's vortex, are only such as must be slaves, the rabble of mankind, whose souls, and whose education, are adapted to servitude, and who know nothing of liberty except the name. But there must still be a

“ large number of the people without the sphere of
“ the opulent man’s influence, namely, that order of
“ men which subsists between the very rich and the
“ very rabble; those men who are possessed of too
“ large fortunes to submit to the neighbouring magis-
“ triates in power, and yet are too poor to set up for ty-
“ ny themselves. In this middle order of mankind
“ are generally to be found all the arts, wisdom, and
“ virtues of society. This order alone is known to
“ be the true preserver of freedom, and may be cal-
“ led the People. Now, it may happen, that this
“ middle order of mankind may lose all its influence
“ in a state, and its voice be in a manner drowned in
“ that of the rabble; for, if the fortune sufficient
“ for qualifying a person at present to give his voice
“ in state affairs, be ten times less than was judged
“ sufficient, upon forming the constitution, it is evi-
“ dent, that greater numbers of the rabble will then
“ be introduced into the political system; and they
“ ever moving in the vortex of the great, will fol-
“ low where greatness shall direct. In such a state
“ therefore, all that the middle order has left, is to
“ preserve the prerogatives and privileges of the one
“ principal tyrant, with the most sacred circumsta-
“ tions; for he divides the power of the rich, and
“ calls off the great from falling with tenfold weight
“ on the middle order placed beneath them. The
“ middle order may be compared to a town, to
“ which the opulent are forming the siege, and

“ who

" which the tyrant is hastening to relieve. While
" the besiegers are in dread of the external enemy,
" it is but natural to offer the townsmen the most spe-
" cious terms ; to flatter them with sounds, and a-
" muse them with privileges ; but if they once de-
"feat the tyrant, the walls of the town will be but
" a small defence to its inhabitants. What they may
" then expect may be seen by turning our eyes to
" Holland, Genoa, or Venice ; where the laws go-
" vern the poor, and the rich govern the laws. I
" am then for, and would die for, monarchy, sacred
" monarchy ; for, if there be any thing sacred a-
" mongst men, it must be the anointed sovereign of
" his people ; and every diminution of his power, in
" war or in peace, is an infringement upon the real
" liberties of the subject. The sounds of liberty, pa-
" triotism, and Britons, have already done ~~much~~ ; it
" is to be hoped that the true sons of freedom will
" prevent their ever doing more. I have known
" many of those bold champions for liberty in my
" time, yet do I not remember one that was not in
" his heart and in his family a tyrant."

My warmth, I found, had lengthened this harangue beyond the rules of good-breeding : but the impatience of my entertainer, who often strove to interrupt it, could be restrained no longer. " What ! " cried he, " then I have been all this while entertaining a Jesuit in parson's cloaths ; but, by all the coal mines of Cornwall, out he shall pack, if my name be Wilkin-

"son." I now found I had gone too far, and asked pardon for the warmth with which I had spoken. "Pardon!" returned he, in a fury: "I think such principles demand ten thousand pardons. What! give up liberty, property, and, as the *Gazetteer* says, lye down to be saddled with wooden shoes! Sir, I insist upon your marching out of this house immediately, to prevent worse consequences; Sir, I insist upon it." I was going to repeat my remonstrances; but just then we heard a footman's rap at the door, and the two ladies cried out, "As sure as death, there is our master and mistress come home." It seems my entertainer was all this while only the butler, who, in his master's absence, had a mind to cut a figure, and be for a while the gentleman himself; and, to say the truth, he talked politics as well as most country gentlemen do. But nothing could now exceed my confusion, upon seeing the gentleman, with his lady, enter; nor was their surprise at finding such company and good cheer less than ours. "Gentlemen," cried the real master of the house to me and my companion, "I am your most humble servant; but I protest this is so unexpected a favour, that I almost sink under the obligation." However unexpected our company might be to him, his, I am sure, was still more so to us; and I was struck dumb with the apprehensions of my own absurdity, when, whom should I next see enter the room, but my dear Miss Arabella Wilmot, who was formerly designed to be married to my son

George;

George ; but whose match was broken off, as already related. As soon as she saw me, she flew to my arms with the utmost joy. " My dear Sir," cried she, " to what happy accident is it that we owe so unexpected a visit ? I am sure my uncle and aunt will be in raptures, when they find they have the good Dr Primrose for their guest." Upon hearing my name, the old gentleman and lady very politely stepped up, and welcomed me with most cordial hospitality. Nor could they forbear smiling, upon being informed of the nature of my present visit : but the unfortunate butler, whom they at first seemed disposed to turn away, was, at my intercession, forgiven.

Mr Arnold and his lady, to whom the house belonged, now insisted upon having the pleasure of my stay for some days ; and as their niece, my charming pupil, whose mind, in some measure, had been formed under my own instructions, joined in their intreaties, I complied. That night I was shown to a magnificent chamber ; and the next morning early, Miss Wilmot desired to walk with me in the garden, which was decorated in the modern manner. After some time spent in pointing out the beauties of the place, she enquired, with seeming unconcern, when last I had heard from my son George. " Alas ! Madam," cried I, " he has now been near three years absent without ever writing to his friends or me. Where he is, I know not ; perhaps I shall never see him or happiness more. No, my dear Madam, we shall never

" more

“more see such pleasing hours as were once spent by
“our fire-side at Wakefield. My little family are
“now dispersing very fast; and poverty has brought
“not only want, but infamy upon us.” The good-
natured girl let fall a tear at this account; but as I
saw her possessed of too much sensibility, I forbore a
more minute detail of our sufferings. It was, how-
ever, some consolation to me, to find that time had
made no alteration in her affections; and that she
had rejected several matches that had been made her-
since our leaving her part of the country. She led
me round all the extensive improvements of the place,
pointing to the several walks and arbours, and at the
same time catching from every object a hint for some
new question relative to my son. In this manner we
spent the forenoon, till the bell summoned us in to
dinner; where we found the manager of the strolling
company, who was come to dispose of tickets for the
Fair Penitent, which was to be acted that evening;
the part of Horatio by a young gentleman, who had
never appeared on any stage before. He seemed to
be very warm in the praises of the new performer,
and averred, that he never saw any who bid so fair
for excellence. Acting, he observed, was not learned
in a day: “But this gentleman,” continued he, “seems
“born to tread the stage. His voice, his figure, his
“attitudes, are all admirable. We caught him up
“accidentally, in our journey down.” This account,
in some measure, excited our curiosity; and, at the
intreaty

intreaty of the ladies, I was prevailed upon to accompany them to the play-house, which was no other than a barn. As the company with which I went was incontestibly the chief of the place, we were received with the greatest respect, and placed in the front seat of the theatre ; where we sat for some time, with no small impatience, to see Horatio make his appearance. The new performer advanced at last, and I found it was my unfortunate son. He was going to begin, when, turning his eyes upon the audience, he perceived us, and stood at once speechless and immovable. The actors behind the scene, who ascribed this pause to his natural timidity, attempted to encourage him ; but instead of going on, he burst into a flood of tears, and retired off the stage. I don't know what were the sensations I felt ; for they succeeded with too much rapidity for description ; but I was soon awaked from this disagreeable reverie by Miss Wilmot, who, pale, and with a trembling voice, desired me to conduct her back to her uncle's. When got home, Mr. Arnold, who was as yet a stranger to our extraordinary behaviour, being informed that the new performer was my son, sent his coach, and an invitation for him ; and as he persisted in his refusal to appear again upon the stage, the players put another in his place, and we soon had him with us. Mr Arnold gave him the kindest reception, and I received him with my usual transport ; for I could never counterfeit false resentment. Miss Wilmot's reception was mixed with

seeming

THE VICAR OF

seeming neglect, and yet I could perceive she acted a studied part. The tumult in her mind seemed not yet abated; she said twenty giddy things that looked like joy, and then laughed loud at her own want of meaning. At intervals, she would take a fly peep at the glass, as if happy in the consciousness of unresisting beauty, and often would ask questions, without giving any manner of attention to the answers.



END OF VOLUME FIRST

